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**T.F. Torrance and the *Consensus Patrum*:
A Reformed, Evangelical, and Ecumenical
Reconstruction of the Church Fathers**

By

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I, Jason Radcliff, hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me, that this thesis is work carried out by me, and that no part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:  Jason R. Radcliff

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Abbreviations

- PG Migne, J.P. *Patrologia Cursus Completus Series Graeca*. 165 volumes.
(Paris: 1857–1886).
- PL Migne, J.P. *Patrologia Cursus Completus Series Latina*. 217 volumes.
(Paris: 1844–1864).

Abstract

This thesis offers a constructive engagement with T.F. Torrance's theological reading of the patristic tradition. It argues that Torrance reconstructs the Fathers into a *Consensus Patrum*, or "Consensus of the Fathers" consisting of catholic/ecumenical themes and figures. Torrance's *consensus* is a creative attempt to produce a Reformed and evangelical version of the *consensus* which involves significant changes to both standard readings of the Fathers in other approaches to the *consensus* and Torrance's own Reformed evangelical tradition. It is unique among other interpreters of the Fathers and ecumenically relevant, offering much to contemporary theology in both substance and method. In order to view Torrance's project in historical context this thesis examines the notion of the *consensus* as found in historical Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant theology. Each tradition has a lens through which they view the Fathers: Aquinas for the Roman Catholics, Palamas for the Orthodox, Augustinian themes for the Reformers, and "de-Hellenization" for liberal Protestants. This thesis places Torrance's project within other contemporary retrievals of the church Fathers arguing for its uniqueness as a distinctively Reformed evangelical approach to the Fathers on their own terms. It inspects the Torrancian *consensus* exploring its consistence of a Reformed and evangelical approach to patristic themes and figures, rooted in the primary theme of the Nicene *ὁμοούσιον* and the primary figure of Athanasius of Alexandria. It examines Torrance's creative reconstruction of the Fathers into a Reformed evangelical *consensus* and points to his constructive achievements demonstrating that Torrance's approach is ecumenically relevant, as seen particularly in his work in the Reformed-Orthodox Dialogue. A critical adoption of the Torrancian *consensus* is proposed in conclusion.

Introduction

Thomas F. Torrance and the *Consensus Patrum*

[T.F. Torrance is] a theologian who is at the same time Orthodox, Catholic and Reformed because he seeks to build up his theology on the one, historical common ground of all three traditions and because he is prepared at the same time to confess in full modesty and sincerity their historical particularities and fortify himself only with their positive forces. Is this not what ought to be commended today across the boundaries of the Christian traditions when Patriarch and Pope and Reformed theologian have been united in reminding the world about the Gift of God's boundless Love, Grace and Truth in and through Christ and His Church?

George Dion. Dragas, "The Significance for the Church of Professor Torrance's Election As Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland," *ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΟΣ ΦΑΡΟΣ* LVIII, no. III-IV (1976): 226.

0.1 Introduction

The twentieth century has seen a movement *ad fontes* of the church Fathers¹ unprecedented other than the time of the Reformation itself. Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic theologians have always used the Fathers; the Reformers used the Fathers, however there was a large gap during a time of the diverging traditions of liberalism and fundamentalism when Protestants did not allow the patristic tradition, or the *Consensus Patrum* ("Consensus of the Fathers"),² to inform their

¹ Throughout this thesis the term "Fathers" is used to denote patristic figures in general, "Greek Fathers" is used to denote patristic figures writing in Greek, and "Latin Fathers" is used to denote patristic figures writing in Latin.

² See Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Frame of Mind* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1985), 5. This is not a phrase that Torrance himself uses very often. He more regularly uses phrases such as "the classical tradition" and "consensus." See Thomas F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 2ff. He also refers to "the Athanasius-Cyril axis of classical theology." See Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West*, Reprint (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 14. The concept of the "Consensus Patrum" is usually traced back to Vincent of Lérins' famous call to hold to "that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all." See Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*, 2.6. The phrase is used in this thesis synonymously with Torrance's "classical theological tradition."

theology.³

The Reformation included a “return to the sources” in regards to both the Bible and the church Fathers as the Reformers sought to prove that they were in line not only with New Testament Christianity but also the theology of the early church, albeit with an emphasis on the Western Augustinian tradition. The early twentieth century found evangelical⁴ Protestants largely ignorant of their patristic heritage on account of, on the one hand, the Fathers being given equal importance to Scripture in medieval Catholicism and, on the other hand, the bypassing of the Fathers in liberal Protestantism. The resulting paucity of knowledge in this regard

³ See the following chapter for elaboration upon this claim.

⁴ The term “evangelical” is used in in a two ways in this thesis to mean: (1) evangelical in the wide sense of “committed to the Gospel of grace” and (2) conservative evangelical, sometimes in the fundamentalist/legalist sense. In doing so, the usage of the term in this thesis follows Torrance’s own use of it. See e.g. Thomas F. Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 39, no. 4 (January 1, 1986) for both uses in one article. See p. 464, 478 for use #1 and p. 472, 477, 479, 480, 481, 482 for use #2. Torrance’s employment of the term in the former sense appears to derive from the traditional use of the term within Protestant circles as denoting the churches arising out of the Protestant Reformation in general (and also, more specifically, delineating them from the liberal churches) but Torrance constructively applies this sense of the term much wider in seeing a greater evangelical tradition extending back through to the patristic era and forward into the contemporary era through Barth (see further chapter three of this thesis). Torrance employs the term positively in this sense. The latter sense of the term is typically coupled with words such as “fundamentalist” or “legalist” and, as such, Torrance appears to be thinking of conservative evangelicals. Typically, Torrance’s employment of the term in this context refers particularly to conservative evangelicals in the Westminster tradition of Calvinism following in the tradition of Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly who Torrance had mind, but generally, this negative use of the term denotes those who use Protestant confessions in a literal and static sense (“fundamentally” and “legalistically”) filtering the Gospel through the confessions whereas the positive use of the term refers to those who remained committed to the Gospel of God’s gracious Self-giving in Christ and read everything else (the Bible, creeds, confessions, etc.,) in light of Christ. Torrance never puts it as such, but it is probably fair to say the positive use of the term refers to Barthians and the negative use of the term refers to those in the evangelical tradition of Torrance’s time who were suspicious of Barthian theology during its entrance into the English-speaking world. Cf. T.A. Noble, *Tyndale House and Fellowship: The First Sixty Years* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 71–78, and David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Routledge, 1989), 254f. In this thesis, as in Torrance, the term is used in both ways and context clarifies which sense is in use.

has meant that many Protestants who later “discover” the Fathers conclude that there is a necessity to convert to Roman Catholicism⁵ or Eastern Orthodoxy.⁶ Moreover, many of those who have returned to the Fathers but remained Protestant have failed to offer any clearly defined Reformed and evangelical hermeneutic to guide patristic interpretation that allows for a truly evangelical reading that is also historically faithful to the Fathers.⁷

Fr. George Dragas, Professor of Patrology at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, has been known to tell his students the story of his first interaction with his beloved professor, Thomas F. Torrance. When young Fr. George first sat down with “Professor Tom” in his office at New College, Edinburgh, the budding students’ eyes were drawn to two items in the scholar’s study: An icon of St. Athanasius and a painting of John Calvin. Upon Fr. George’s inquiry about the items, Professor Torrance told Fr. George, “*Always* follow the example of St. Athanasius.” When Fr. George asked about the other figure, Torrance responded, “Well, you should read him.” This colorful anecdote illustrates Torrance’s unique approach to Reformed and patristic theology and, in many ways, encapsulates the essence of this thesis.

⁵ Thomas Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984).

⁶ Peter E. Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox: A Journey to the Ancient Christian Faith*, (Ben Lomand: Conciliar Press, 1992).

⁷ Perhaps the two most famous: Thomas C. Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy: Signs of New Life in Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999).

Torrance constructs (or to use his own recurring term, “reconstructs”)⁸ the *Consensus Patrum* around catholic (or ecumenical) themes and figures.⁹ Torrance is unique for his time in that as a Protestant, evangelical, and Reformed theologian he uses the church Fathers as an authoritative voice speaking within the theological tradition into his own theological system. However, Torrance’s uniqueness goes even deeper inasmuch as, being a western Protestant theologian, his patristic reconstruction consists primarily of the Greek Fathers of the Christian East. He provides a fresh voice into the theological conversation of his time by means of his approach to dogmatic and historical theology as a Reformed theologian with strong catholic leanings, intentionally situating himself and his reading within the universal church. Torrance’s reading of the Fathers is unique amongst other interpreters because as both evangelical and Reformed, he combines them with theological themes and figures from his own tradition. Torrance has a unique conception of the *Consensus Patrum*, which is centered upon Christology and informed by grace, consisting of primarily Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, along with figures such as Irenaeus of Lyons, Didymus the Blind, Epiphanius of Salamis, John Calvin, Karl Barth, and H.R. Mackintosh. For Torrance the *Consensus Patrum* is contained within the core message of the Fathers, namely, the Nicene ὁμοούσιον and the epistemological and soteriological implications therein, which he understands to be best encapsulated by Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria.

⁸ Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, Reprint (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1996).

⁹ See Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* for the flowering of Torrance’s reconstruction. However, it exists throughout his published and unpublished material.

Torrance's *consensus* is a creative attempt to produce a Reformed and evangelical version of the *consensus* which involves significant changes to both the standard interpretations of the Fathers and Torrance's own Reformed and evangelical tradition. The Torrancian *consensus* has many constructive achievements that have been overlooked by his commentators and his contemporaries on account of his being evaluated simply as an historian of Christian thought. When Torrance is viewed instead as a Reformed and evangelical theologian constructing a Reformed and evangelical version of the *Consensus Patrum*, as he is in this thesis, his many contributions emerge.

0.2 Scope of the thesis

This thesis explores Torrance's notion of the *Consensus Patrum*. It traces the patristic scholarship of Torrance and his appropriation of it into his own evangelical and Reformed tradition by means of his construction of the Torrancian *consensus*. Moreover, this thesis offers an exploration of where Torrance's project fits within the map of theological scholarship. The questions this thesis seeks to answer are: (1) What is the nature of Torrance's patristic scholarship, (2) is his project a successful constructive-theological endeavour, and (3) in what way should contemporary theological scholarship carry Torrance's project forward?

This thesis argues that Torrance constructs his *Consensus Patrum* around key theological themes and figures. The primary theme is the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ and the primary figure is Athanasius of Alexandria.

Additionally, other patristic themes and figures, inasmuch as they are situated in relation to Athanasius' basic theological ὁμοούσιον-centered commitments, fit within the *consensus*.

Torrance's reconstruction of the *Consensus Patrum* contains much from which theologians, particular evangelical, can learn. A full study and assessment of it, in addition to a proposed "next step," therefore, has much to offer the church and the academy. From an historical viewpoint the results will show how a systematic theologian used patristic sources. From an ecclesiastical viewpoint it will supply the Reformed evangelical community with, at the very least, an example of a theologian who effectively appropriates the Fathers in such a way that preserves faithfulness to the Fathers and commitment to the Reformed evangelical tradition. It will also contribute to the growing discussion of Protestants returning to the Fathers and hopefully provide further impetus for ecumenical discussion on the basis of a shared theological tradition. Thus, it is important both to look at Torrance, a major Protestant theologian who uses the Fathers, and work from Torrance towards an evangelical hermeneutic of interpreting the Fathers; indeed, an "evangelical patristic theology."

0.3 Outline of the thesis

After (1) exploring the pre-Torrancian history of the *Consensus Patrum* and situating Torrance in his context, the presentation of the research is organized by (2) major catholic themes and figures in the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* as

organized primarily by Torrance in his magisterial text, *The Trinitarian Faith* (and also elsewhere) and (3) by exploring Torrance's ecumenical relevance, especially as seen in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue within which he played a major role. In the conclusion, a proposed way forward, an "evangelical patristic theology," is offered.

The chapters are organized accordingly. Chapter one is an historical introduction to the *consensus*. This chapter examines the manner in which all traditions approaching the *consensus* have a lens through which they view the Fathers and offers an historical narrative of the prevailing approaches to the *consensus* by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestants. Chapter one also places Torrance in his immediate context, namely, evangelical "discoveries" of the Fathers, and argues for his uniqueness. Chapters two and three offer an exploration of the catholic themes and figures of the Torrancian *consensus*. These chapters examine the way in which Torrance's approach to the Fathers is both faithful to the patristic tradition and to his own Reformed evangelical commitments and also involves significant changes to both standard readings of the Fathers and his own tradition. Chapter four explores Torrance's ecumenical relevance. This chapter argues that Torrance's appropriation of the Fathers into his Reformed and evangelical tradition is an achievement of his broad catholic (ecumenical) ecclesiology, which allows him to remain faithfully within his own tradition while appropriating truly Greek patristic themes and figures, allowing the two to dynamically inform and reform one another. The conclusion explores a critical

appropriation of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* and offers the next steps towards an “evangelical patristic theology.”

The argument throughout the thesis is that Torrance offers a viable Reformed evangelical reconstruction of the *Consensus Patrum* which has yet to be fully appreciated by patristics scholars and theologians. This is argued by means of exploration of the Torrancian *consensus* consisting of catholic themes and figures (primarily the ὁμοούσιον and Athanasius). The argument is that Torrance’s project has much merit and relevance and an “evangelical patristic theology” should critically adopt the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* and move forward on the path paved by Torrance, assuming many elements of Torrance’s reading while revisiting portions thereof.

0.4 Conclusion

Torrance’s reconstruction of the *Consensus Patrum* is a bounteous well from which much can be drawn. Prior to exploring its nature and merit, it is necessary to first explore the history of the *consensus* in Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant theology up to and during Torrance’s time in order to view Torrance’s project in its historical and theological context. Therefore, it is with an historical overview of the *Consensus Patrum* with which this thesis begins.

Chapter 1

The *Consensus Patrum*: An historical overview

In the catholic church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere (ubique), always (semper), by all (ab omnibus). For that is truly (vere) and properly (proprieque) universal (catholicum), which, as the name itself and the reason of the thing declare, comprehends all universally.

Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitory*, 2.6. PL 50.0640.

1.1 Introduction

Theologians throughout the centuries have long considered the notion of the existence of some sort of consensual tradition existing amongst the church Fathers. From the earliest centuries, the Fathers themselves sought to prove that their theological views were in line with antiquity.¹ Tertullian pointed to the Rule of Faith.² Basil the Great referred to an “unwritten tradition.”³ Athanasius of Alexandria defended the doctrine of the Trinity because it was “preserved by the Fathers.”⁴ Eventually, the church began to formulate creeds to encapsulate their view.⁵ Then, in their polemics, the Fathers began to compile *florilegium* in their works, in order to portray their viewpoint as in line with the *consensus*.⁶ Finally,

¹ For example, when they tried to prove the connection between Plato and Moses in order to prove the antiquity of their theology. See Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, 59.

² Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 4.2.1.

³ Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, 27.

⁴ Athanasius, *Letters on the Holy Spirit*, 1.28.

⁵ As Williams puts it: “While the ancient Christians always regarded the past with esteem, one can point to an increasing number of instances in the late fifth and sixth centuries when writers thought of the earlier fathers as privileged witnesses to Christian truth.” See D. H. Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition: The Formative Influence of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 50.

⁶ These were lists of patristic sayings in support of their viewpoint. See Andrew Louth’s introduction to St John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies Against Those Who Attack the Divine Images*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980), 14–15 for a lucid account. Louth notes that they first were used leading up to the Council of

upon the dawn of the Reformation in the Western church, the Reformers sought to prove that they were in line with the Fathers and that the medieval Catholics were not.⁷

By the time of the Reformation Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants each viewed themselves as the community truly faithful to the classic patristic tradition. Accordingly, each group viewed the Fathers through the lens that they were the faithful continuation of the early church and read the patristic tradition in light of their current ecclesiastical situation, viewing their community as the faithful continuation of ancient Christianity. The Eastern churches tended to read the *consensus* through the developments in Byzantine theology (especially Gregory Palamas). The Western churches, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, tended to emphasize Augustinian theological themes. Whereas the Protestant communities have continued emphasizing Augustine, the Roman Catholics filter Augustine through Aquinas.

This approach continued in Protestantism following the Reformation until 19th century Protestant liberal theology.⁸ Following the time of Protestant

Chalcedon. Eventually, *florigelium* were used by the Fathers in polemics in instances such as the *filioque* debate.

⁷ See Anthony N.S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of Church Fathers* (London: T & T Clark, 1999), 3; Johannes van Oort, "John Calvin and the Church Fathers," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irena Backus (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 697–699. Indeed, as one scholar aptly puts it: "In the controversies that followed the Reformation, Catholic and Protestant scholasticism took on a more polemical edge, coloring their development of theology's rational conclusions by their needs to defend respective ecclesial positions. Catholic theology stressed the structures and role of church authority, and the legitimacy of practices and beliefs lacking obvious roots in scripture; Protestant scholasticism stressed the primacy of the Word of God in church organization and worship, and distanced itself from any aspects of Catholic teaching lacking biblical warrant." See Gabriel Flynn and P. D. Murray, *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 335.

liberalism, Protestants, whether liberal or evangelical, tended towards the view propagated by liberalism: That Protestantism bypassed the patristic era and returned to true, biblical Christianity. The ensuing neglect of not only patristic scholarship but also allowing the Fathers to undergird dogmatic theology was a denial of the way of the Reformers and it opened the door towards 20th century Protestant “retrievals” of the Fathers.⁹ Torrance, a Protestant in the Reformed and evangelical tradition, has much to offer as an excellent example of a largely successful retrieval.

This chapter will explore the different approaches to the *Consensus Patrum* within historical Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism exploring each group by looking at the vision of various figures and their ideas in order to put Torrance’s project in historical and ecclesiastical context. The focus will be upon Protestantism (particularly the evangelical Protestantism of and following Torrance’s own time) because Torrance emerged out of this group (and influenced it) and, indeed, was most faithful to the Protestant, especially Reformed and evangelical, approach to the Fathers. This chapter will argue that each group had its own lens through which they viewed the Fathers. The conclusion will be that Torrance’s notion of the *consensus* and the lens through which he views it

⁸ Though, as Fairbairn argues, even the liberals (e.g. Harnack) had a lens through which they read the Fathers. See Donald Fairbairn, “Patristic Soteriology: Three Trajectories,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 2 (June 1, 2007): 290–293. As shall be explored below, the liberal approach often assumed the lens that the Protestant church faithfully and rightly *bypassed* the patristic era returning to a better, more biblical Christianity.

⁹ “Theologies of retrieval” is John Webster’s term. See John Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 584–599.

emerges out of his own Protestant tradition, sharing many core traits and convictions with it, although there are substantial points of contact between Torrance and other figures as well.

1.2 The *Consensus Patrum* in Roman Catholicism

There have been a variety of components contributing to Roman Catholic readings of the *consensus*. However, three fundamentals have dominated their reading throughout history: (1) Their conception of the *consensus* as quantitative, (2) their tendency to interpret the Fathers through Augustine and, eventually, Thomas Aquinas, and (3) their conception of the *consensus* as developing. This section will explore these three key elements of the Roman Catholic reading of the *Consensus Patrum* in order to view the lens through which they viewed the Fathers.

In the theology of Counter-Reformation, Roman Catholicism turned to the famous adage of Vincent of Lérins. Vincent states:

In the catholic church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all. For that is truly and in the strictest sense Catholic, which, as the name itself and the reason of the thing declare, comprehends all universally. This rule we shall observe if we follow universality, antiquity, consent. We shall follow universality if we confess that one faith to be true, which the whole church throughout the world confesses; antiquity, if we in no wise depart from those interpretations which it is manifest were notoriously held by our holy ancestors and fathers; consent, in like manner, if in antiquity itself we adhere to the consentient definitions and determinations of all, or at the least of almost all priests and doctors.¹⁰

For the Roman Catholics, the key to his credo was in the statement's first sentence, "everywhere, always, and by all." To Roman Catholics of the Counter-Reformation

¹⁰ Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitory*, 2.6.

this implied a numerical *consensus*. Roman Catholics of this era maintained that individually the Fathers could err but taken as a whole they were authoritative and even infallible.¹¹ Thus, unanimity was greatly stressed.¹² It was here that a strongly defined notion of the *consensus* was used, namely, the numerical consensus. Indeed, only the teaching of the Fathers as a whole was considered to be authoritative.¹³

Francis Turretin, hailing from the Reformed tradition, provides a witness to this historically. Turretin lists three opinions that the Roman Catholics of his time held concerning the authority of the Fathers: (1) Their writings are equal to Scripture both individually and collectively, (2) their writings are merely human, and (3) individually the Fathers are fallible but collectively they are infallible.¹⁴ Furthermore, according to Turretin, the council of Trent asserts “the traditions of the Fathers pertaining both to faith and practice must be received with equal affection of piety with the Old and New Testaments.”¹⁵ Turretin sees the majority of the Catholics of his time contending that the collective teaching of the Fathers was as authoritative as the Scriptures. Thus, at least according to certain of their

¹¹ Jean-Louis Quantin, “The Fathers in Seventeenth Century Roman Catholic Theology,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 960.

¹² Quantin, “The Fathers in Seventeenth Century Roman Catholic Theology,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 960–967.

¹³ According to Geoffrey Bromiley this often amounted to “patristic prooftexting” e.g. in Peter Lombard. See David F. Wells and Clark H. Pinnock, eds., *Toward a Theology for the Future* (Carol Stream: Creation House, 1971), 129.

¹⁴ Frances Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, II.21.3.

¹⁵ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, II.21.3.

opponents, in their Counter-Reformation polemics the Catholics held the tradition in equal authority to the Scriptures.¹⁶

The second element of the Roman Catholic reading of the *Consensus Patrum* was their emphasis on Augustine. Western theologians from at least the medieval period onward emphasized Augustine and Augustinian theological themes. Later this emphasis became Augustine filtered through Thomas Aquinas, and, more generally, Western scholastic thinking.

Western theologians in the middle ages considered Augustine to be the church Father *par excellence*. Peter Lombard is an illustrative example. As Bougerol puts it, for Lombard, “Augustine by far outclasses any other ‘authorities.’”¹⁷ This was no less the case for Thomas Aquinas.¹⁸ Indeed, according to Elders’ helpful chart, Aquinas cited Augustine far more than any other theological figure.¹⁹ Thus, for medieval Catholic theologians, Augustine and Augustinian theology dominated. This view was no doubt solidified by Thomas Aquinas’s magisterial work in scholastic theology.

¹⁶ This was not simply a polemical attack by Turretin. Thomas Aquinas held to this view and placed the writings of the Fathers on the side of the Bible in terms of authority. See Leo J. Elders, “Thomas Aquinas and the Fathers of the Church,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 339–340 citing Aquinas, *Quodlib.* XII, art. 26 (q.17, art. Un.): *Dicendum quoad ab eodem Spiritu Scripturae sunt expositae et editae* (“the writing [of the Fathers] and the Scripture were written and explained by the same Spirit”).

¹⁷ Jacques-Guy Bougerol, “The Church Fathers and the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 115.

¹⁸ Elders, “Thomas Aquinas and the Fathers of the Church,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 338. Though Aquinas no doubt read and appropriated the Greek Fathers as well, particularly Pseudo-Dionysius. See 344–347. Here he perhaps paved the way for the return to the mysticism of Origen by 20th century Catholic theologians. See below. However, Aquinas cited Pseudo-Dionysius significantly less than Augustine.

¹⁹ Elders, “Thomas Aquinas and the Fathers of the Church,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 346–347.

By the turn of the 20th century, Roman Catholic theology was steeped in Thomistic thought. In his book on 20th century Catholic theologians, Fergus Kerr humorously paints a picture of the context leading up to the theologians in the Nouvelle Théologie school of Catholicism and the Second Vatican Council: A boring recitation of neothomist theology.²⁰ However, when the Nouvelle Théologie theologians entered the scene, they began to protest this bland form of neoscholastic Thomist theology. Yves Congar²¹ and Henri de Lubac²² jumpstarted this movement and it was carried on by figures such as Hans Urs von Balthasar.²³

These Catholic theologians attempted, by means of a departure from bland neoscholasticism/neothomism and return to the broader *consensus*, to read Aquinas as a part of the whole tradition rather than a-contextually and a-historically.²⁴ Accordingly, in their polemics the theologians of the Nouvelle Théologie school worked to portray neoscholasticism as a departure from the

²⁰ Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism* (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 1–6.

²¹ According to Kerr, Congar believed neoscholasticism was not a preservation of the ancient tradition, as it claimed to be. Accordingly, Congar held that, “the reform or renewal of the Catholic Church...was to be on the basis of a retrieval of the fullness of the Catholic tradition that he believed had been lost as Catholics reacted against Protestantism in the so-called Counter-Reformation, and against the ancient churches of the East when they rejected papal authority as conceived and practiced in the early Middle Ages.” See Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*, 37–38. Accordingly, the movement was inherently ecumenical in nature.

²² According to Webster, de Lubac *et al.* traced the fall of Catholic theology to Duns Scotus and Ockham. See Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. Webster, Tanner, and Torrance, 588. Webster also notes that Radical Orthodoxy has picked up this stream of retrieval.

²³ Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*, 122–125. Though there were undoubtedly differences between each of these figures. See Flynn and Murray, *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, 279–288 for an excellent discussion of the differences between de Lubac and Balthasar, that latter of whom these authors say was more in line with neothomism than the former.

²⁴ Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*, 32–33. Here Kerr discusses Marie-Dominique Chenu; though, the recovery and re-reading of Aquinas was the main element of the other figures as well.

classic tradition of the Fathers and present the Nouvelle Théologie movement as truly faithful to the Fathers, and therefore, providing the faithful interpretation of Thomas Aquinas.²⁵ Interestingly, in their reinterpretation of Aquinas, they returned to Origen.²⁶ This “new” theology, while ecumenically relevant in many ways,²⁷ is typically Western in its focus upon Augustine and typically Roman Catholic in its centeredness upon Aquinas.

John Henry Newman has played a major role in developing the Roman Catholic tradition’s approach to the *consensus*. George Dion Dragas discusses Newman’s view of the patristic tradition and the Eastern Fathers in particular in his book *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria: Original Research and New Perspectives*.²⁸ In his book, Dragas argues that Newman’s contribution to patristic studies consisted primarily in his adoption of the methodology of the Fathers; their “pious orthodoxy.” Dragas holds that Newman read the Fathers so intimately that he began to live in their world and they became contemporaries with one another.²⁹ Indeed, for Dragas, Newman embraced the Eastern Fathers and adopted their “Christian and ecclesiastical vision.”³⁰ Dragas contends that Newman adopted the

²⁵ Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*, 85–86.

²⁶ Kerr states: “The most surprising development in twentieth-century Catholic theology—for neoscholastic theologians and especially for Thomists—was the retrieval of Origen.” Kerr traces this to Jean Daniélou and Olivier Rousseau. See Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*, 80. Notably, even Karl Rahner’s first text was on Origen. See p. 101.

²⁷ The relation of, for example, Karl Rahner to T.F. Torrance will be discussed later in this thesis.

²⁸ George Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria: Original Research and New Perspectives* (Rollinsford: Orthodox Research Institute, 2005).

²⁹ Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria*, 171.

³⁰ Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria*, 172.

habits and method of Athanasius, especially the connection of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, or pious theology.³¹ As Dragas states, Newman saw

Tradition as the fundamental intuition behind St. Athanasius' arguments, which is connected with the inner 'subjectivity' of the Church (the 'mind of Christ') [νοῦς χριστοῦ] or 'Church mentality' [ἐκκλησιαστικὸν φρόνημα], which finds its expression in the Church's witness through catechetical and liturgical practice and, indeed, historical action.³²

Furthermore, for Athanasius and Newman there is an assumed tradition that drove theology, and it was this tradition that was used to interpret the scriptures.³³

Newman, according to Dragas, adopted this methodology of Athanasius and used it in his own context. In his estimate this is what made Newman's reading of the saint and, more generally, the *consensus* so unique.

Newman's views on the Fathers and on tradition developed throughout his life. King helpfully traces Newman's use of the Alexandrian Fathers³⁴ and the development of Newman's views. During what King called Newman's "early period"³⁵ the Oxford theologian conceived of a distinction between the Episcopal Tradition, which he saw as fixed, and the prophetic tradition.³⁶ For Newman, the Fathers were simply interpreters of the fixed Episcopal Tradition. Newman further

³¹ Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria*, 179.

³² Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria*, 178.

³³ Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria*, 178. Though Newman certainly developed in his view of the Fathers. Early on he saw the Anglican tradition as "via media" and a faithful continuation of the early church. See Brian E. Daley, "The Church Fathers," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, eds. Ian Ker and Terrence Merrigan, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 29. Early on Newman had a more static notion of tradition. Later, after concluding doctrine "develops," Newman saw the Roman Catholic Church as the faithful continuation of the early church.

³⁴ See Benjamin J. King, *Newman and the Alexandrian Fathers: Shaping Doctrine in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³⁵ Exemplified by John Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (London: E. Lumley, 1871); John Newman, *Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church, Viewed Relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism* (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1837).

³⁶ King, *Newman and the Alexandrian Fathers*, 38–46.

developed in his middle³⁷ and later periods.³⁸ In his early stage, Newman saw the Anglican tradition as a “via media” between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.³⁹

Eventually, however, Newman concluded that Anglicanism was not a faithful continuation of the ancient church. Primarily, he concluded that Vincent of Lérins’ statement from the *Commonitory* was not to be considered numerically.⁴⁰ For, there indeed seemed to him to be variations in the teaching of the church.⁴¹ Rather than being core variations, he contended doctrine continually “deepened” and “developed” throughout the history of the church.⁴² Newman saw the development of doctrine as the way in which doctrine is brought into “consistency and form.”⁴³ Newman called his view “the development of doctrine.” Newman held that one could not understand the early Fathers without the later Fathers and from here began to understand doctrine as having developed throughout the patristic era and beyond.⁴⁴

Newman seemed to imagine that this view could imply a variety of outcomes with which he did not agree. Therefore, Newman laid out what he saw as

³⁷ Exemplified by John Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1909).

³⁸ Exemplified John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (London: Burns, Oates, and Co., 1870).

³⁹ Though he put Anglicanism closer to Roman Catholicism than Protestantism. See Henry Chadwick, *Tradition and Exploration: Collected Papers on Theology and the Church* (Norwich: Canterbury, 1994), 160–161.

⁴⁰ John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 9.

⁴¹ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 5.

⁴² Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 21–22. Though this view was already developed to some extent by the Catholic faculty at Tübingen. See Gunter Biemer, *Newman on Tradition*, (Berlin: Herder and Herder, 1967), 1.

⁴³ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 28.

⁴⁴ King, *Newman and the Alexandrian Fathers*, 51–52.

the characteristics of faithful development: Preservation of the type, shared principles, the same organization, anticipation in the beginning of the subsequent phases, later protection and subservience of the earlier, and the power of assimilation.⁴⁵ Without these characteristics the development could in no way be considered faithful. Rather, Newman saw any divergences as heretical development.

Newman's conclusion was that "modern Catholicism is nothing else but simply the legitimate growth and complement that is the natural and necessary development of the doctrine of the early church."⁴⁶ For him, though contemporary Roman Catholic doctrines could not be found in patristic theology explicitly, they were legitimate developments of the teaching of the Fathers. He included numerous examples of this in his *Essay on the Development of Doctrine*, which was, in many ways, a justification of his conversion to Roman Catholicism.⁴⁷ This is why for Newman, "to be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant"⁴⁸ and "were Athanasius to come to life he would undoubtedly recognize the Catholic Church as his own communion."⁴⁹ Among many other reasons, this was why Newman himself became Roman Catholic after a life in the Church of England. In his mind, Protestant doctrine was not a faithful development of the theology of the early church, as was Roman Catholic teaching.

⁴⁵ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 124.

⁴⁶ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 123.

⁴⁷ See Gerard H. McCarren, "Development of Doctrine," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, eds. Ker and Merrigan, 118. Though the view was present in a nascent form in Newman's earlier works. See p. 119.

⁴⁸ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 6.

⁴⁹ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 71.

1.3 The *Consensus Patrum* in Eastern Orthodoxy

There are a variety of elements which have influenced the Eastern Orthodox view of the *consensus*. Central, however, are the viewpoints that reading the *consensus* must be done Christo-centrally, the *consensus* is inherently synthetic, and, ultimately, the Byzantine tradition is central, particularly as read through the neopalamite tradition of Lossky. This section will explore these three key elements of the Eastern Orthodox view of the *Consensus Patrum* which have acted as a lens through which the early tradition was viewed.

John Behr, the dean of St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York, has recently contended that there are many problems with the modern study of patristics, primarily because it has become mainly a study of Late Antiquity rather than theology.⁵⁰ His theological project as seen in *The Mystery of Christ* is the "re-appropriation of a pre-modern perspective in a cautious post-modern fashion."⁵¹ For Behr it is essential to do theology the way in which the disciples came to know Christ, namely, through the Passion of Christ.⁵²

In Behr's words, "the way to Nicaea is not plotted retrospectively from Nicaea, as if it were itself the starting point, but with reference to the revelation of God in Christ, the subject of the Christian confession from the beginning; if Nicaea is a definitive moment in Christian identity, it is because it preserves the truth of *the*

⁵⁰ John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006), 18. Furthermore, it has become a study of the "development of doctrine already supposedly known." See p. 18.

⁵¹ Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 19.

⁵² Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 19–20; See also John Behr, *The Nicene Faith: Part I* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 208–231.

definitive moment.”⁵³ At another point Behr articulates further that theologians must not start with static theological concepts and terms but rather do theology with the early theologians and follow their method, that is, “through the Cross and in the manner in which the Passion is interpreted and Christ proclaimed.”⁵⁴ Thus, Behr wants to do away with the method that begins theology with an abstract doctrine of God or Christ and prefers instead to view Jesus through his passion and resurrection.⁵⁵ Behr contends that it is essential to start with God’s economy and move to his ontology, rather than the other way around. This is a method Behr believes came from the Fathers and should be emulated by theologians today.⁵⁶

Behr contends that it would be pure speculation to say anything about God’s nature or God’s economy other than what can be seen in Christ’s person, life, and work. He critiques modern theology for starting with abstract theological pre-suppositions rather than a dynamic view of God.⁵⁷ It is this method, Behr argues, that causes for the “partitive exegesis” of some of the Fathers; the ascription of certain things to the humanity of Christ and certain things to the divinity of Christ⁵⁸ in addition to other false elements.

Georges Florovsky, the Russian Orthodox theologian who propagated a call for an Eastern Orthodox “return to the Fathers,” has had much to say concerning

⁵³ Behr, *The Nicene Faith: Part I*, 2.

⁵⁴ Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 19.

⁵⁵ Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 84. Behr contends that Christ is the first principle or hypothesis for all Christian theology.

⁵⁶ Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 174. He contends this is how Athanasius viewed theology. See p. 87.

⁵⁷ Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 173.

⁵⁸ Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 476–477.

the *consensus*.⁵⁹ Primarily, he contended that the “Vincentian canon” was inadequate. This means that Vincent of Lérins’ call to hold what has been believed “everywhere, always, and by all” cannot be understood numerically or empirically.

As Florovsky puts it:

Decisive value resides in inner catholicity, not in empirical universality. The opinions of the Fathers are accepted, not as formal subjection to outward authority, but because of the inner evidence of their catholic truth. The whole body of the Church has the right of verifying, or, to be more exact, the right, and not only the right but the duty of certifying.⁶⁰

This means that the *consensus* for Florovsky is not a numerical mean or even empirically verifiable at all. Rather, the authentic *consensus* is that which reflects the mind of the Church, the “ἐκκλησιαστικὸν φρόνημα.”⁶¹ Florovsky saw this as the way in which the Fathers themselves understood tradition. In his words, “the appeal to Tradition was actually an appeal to the mind of the Church.”⁶² Thus, in the thought of the Fathers, Florovsky argues, tradition is primarily a hermeneutical principle and method.⁶³

Therefore, for Florovsky, the *consensus* is synthetic in nature.⁶⁴ Herein, he called for theologians to follow the “neopatristic synthesis.” Florovsky contends that “following the Holy Fathers” could not refer to some sort of abstract Tradition.

⁵⁹ See Ross Joseph Sauve, “Georges V. Florovsky and Vladimir N. Lossky an exploration, comparison and demonstration of their unique approaches to the neopatristic synthesis,” (PhD thesis, University of Durham, 2010), for an excellent thesis on Florovsky’s view of tradition.

⁶⁰ Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, Collected Works of Georges Florovsky: V. 1 (Belmont : Nordland, 1972), 51–54.

⁶¹ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 103.

⁶² Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 83.

⁶³ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 79.

⁶⁴ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 106. Florovsky calls it a “living tradition” because, ultimately, he argues, Tradition is “the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church.”

Rather, it must be an appeal to Holy Witnesses and examples.⁶⁵ Thus, he viewed Athanasius, for example, within the synthesis of the other Fathers. As such, Gregory Palamas is within the line of patristic tradition via connections with the Cappadocians and Maximus the Confessor.⁶⁶

Florovsky held that the goal of theology is the acquirement of the mind of the Fathers.⁶⁷ Florovsky's neopatristic synthesis is a combination of the entire tradition of the Fathers and indeed an appeal to their "mind." Florovsky believed it would be wrong to refer to any sort of static or abstract *consensus*. He saw this in the Roman Catholics who end the *consensus* with the Scholastics, the Protestants who end it with the 5th century, and even the Orthodox who end it with the Seventh Ecumenical Council.⁶⁸ Contrary to these three views, Florovsky argued that the Holy Spirit is still working and therefore the *consensus* continues into contemporary times.⁶⁹ Herein, he critiqued modern theologians for leaving out the Byzantine period of theological development.⁷⁰

John Meyendorff, the famed patristics scholar and Orthodox theologian, held what could be termed the traditional Orthodox view of the Fathers and was very much in line with Florovsky. Meyendorff contended that because the same Spirit

⁶⁵ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 106.

⁶⁶ See Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 113–120.

⁶⁷ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 107–109. Florovsky argues that the key is to not quote the Fathers but rather to acquire their mind and follow them because the tradition of the Fathers is inherently *kerygmatic* and centered on piety.

⁶⁸ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 110.

⁶⁹ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 111.

⁷⁰ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 112.

inspired the Scriptures who inspired the saints, they are to be read together.⁷¹

Thus, the Gospel must always be interpreted within the framework of the “apostolic tradition” or “the wider, living, and uninterrupted continuity of the apostolic church.”⁷²

A statement concerning his method, though lengthy, deserves to be quoted in full:

In any systematic presentation of Byzantine theology, there is...a danger of forcing it into the mold of rational categories foreign to its very nature. This is precisely what occurred in many textbooks of dogmatic theology which appeared in the Orthodox East after the eighteenth century, which claimed to remain faithful to the theology of the Byzantine Fathers. They have been ably characterized by Georges Florovsky as expressions of a “Western captivity” of the Orthodox mind. For, it is not enough to quote an abundance of proof-texts from patristic or Byzantine authors: true consistency requires a unity of method and congeniality of approach.⁷³

Thus, Meyendorff, and Florovsky with him, wanted to reform the way in which Byzantine theology was studied in general and patristic studies in particular. Instead of reading it through a Western, often scholastic lens, they propose reading the Fathers on their own terms. Florovsky’s “Western captivity” must be viewed as a critique of Western theology, especially methodology.

Ultimately, however, the Orthodox read the *consensus* through the lens of “neopalamism.”⁷⁴ Simply put, in an attempt to preserve God’s ultimate

⁷¹ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. (London: Mowbrays, 1974), 22.

⁷² Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 8.

⁷³ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 128.

⁷⁴ Or, in the words of Zizioulas, “neopalamite spectacles” See John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 139. In this instance, Zizioulas criticizes those who attack Gregory Palamas and read him through Lossky. Nevertheless, embedded within this was no doubt a critique of Lossky and the neopalamites themselves. This is not to accuse Florovsky and Meyendorff of neopalamism. Rather, it is simply a

transcendence, this view contends that God limits interaction with the world to God's uncreated (and impersonal) energies.⁷⁵ This view is perhaps rooted, at least in part, in Lossky's unique notion of the development of doctrine.⁷⁶

There are definitely differences between Florovsky, Meyendorff, and the neopalamites, but they and others attempting retrievals of the earlier Fathers assumed elements of neopalamism and read the earlier Fathers through a neopalamite reading of Gregory Palamas and the later Byzantine Fathers. Essentially, the neopalamite reading views the early Fathers through this certain reading of Gregory Palamas. Florovsky, for example, saw significant similarities between Athanasius and Gregory Palamas.⁷⁷ Additionally, Meyendorff held that Athanasius believed in a sharp distinction between essence and energy in God. In Meyendorff's words:

The notion of creation, as expressed by Athanasius, leads to a distinction in God between his transcendent essence and his properties such as "power" or "goodness," which expresses his existence and action *ad extra*, not his essence.⁷⁸

Meyendorff explicated the opinion that what would later be called "Palamism" was in fact precisely the theology Athanasius espoused concerning the distinction between γεννάω (*begetting*) and γενάω (*creating*).⁷⁹ Thus, Torrance's oft quoted

statement that elements of the neopalamite assumptions existed in their theology, namely, reading the early Fathers through a certain reading of the later Fathers (especially Palamas).

⁷⁵ See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 213 for a classic neopalamite rendering of this idea.

⁷⁶ See Sauve, "Georges V. Florovsky and Vladimir N. Lossky an exploration, comparison and demonstration of their unique approaches to the neopatristic synthesis," 102–108.

⁷⁷ See Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 130–132 and Georges Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption* (Belmont: Nordland, 1976), 43–78. This chapter in Florovsky's book is an otherwise excellent chapter; however, he attempts to portray Athanasius as basically a Palamite.

⁷⁸ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 130.

⁷⁹ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 131–132.

Athanasian phrase “it would be more pious (εὐσεβέτερον) and true (ἀλεθές) to signify (σημμαίνειν) God from the Son (ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ) and call him Father, than to name (ὀνομάζειν) God from his works alone and call him unoriginate (ἀγέννητον)”⁸⁰ was used by Meyendorff to portray Athanasius’ distinction between οὐσία and ἐνέργεια (*energy*). Meyendorff saw this distinction as being especially important in the context of deification.⁸¹ Thus, Palamas’ formulation of what Meyendorff held to be an Athanasian distinction of the three elements of God: Essence, energy, and the three hypostases.⁸²

1.4 The *Consensus Patrum* in early Protestantism

Protestant theologians and churchmen have studied the Fathers from the very beginning of their movement. The Reformation took place during the Renaissance surge of *ad fontes* or “return to the sources.” Following this, the Reformers returned not only to the Bible in its original languages but also to its patristic interpreters and commentators.

The Reformers, however, did not have the full palate of patristic sources available to them. Indeed, there were only particular texts and particular editions of the Fathers in circulation during the time of the Reformation. Widely available to the Reformers were the following Latin compilations and editions: *Harmony of*

⁸⁰ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 49 citing Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* I.34 and referencing *Contra Arianos*, I.16, 33; *De Decretis*, 31, and Hilary *De Trinitate*, I.17; 3.22; 2.6–8. Torrance uses this to assert the priority of God’s self-revelation in Christ over any sort of natural theology.

⁸¹ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 186.

⁸² Meyendorff, *Byzantine theology*, 186 citing PG, 151.1173B. See also Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 187 for further elaboration on the Palamite viewpoint of a threefold distinction between energy, hypostases, and essence.

Discordant Canons (later called *The Decree of Gratian*) which focused upon the first four councils, *The Glossa Ordinaria* which offered commentary on the Gospels, Gregory the Great's *Epistle 25* which emphasized the first four councils as canonical, and Vincent of Lérins' *Commonitorium*.⁸³ Additionally, there were editions of Irenaeus⁸⁴ and Tertullian⁸⁵ and the Reformers heavily relied upon Latin editions of the Greek Fathers such as Athanasius and Basil for defense of the doctrine of the Trinity.⁸⁶ Backus also notes that a variety of guides on how to read the Fathers were in circulation.⁸⁷

Emerging from the Western tradition, Protestants typically focused on Augustine and Augustinian theology, seeing him as the theologian *par excellence* of the *Consensus Patrum*. Though, there were elements of early Protestant theology that were more in line with the Greek Fathers than typical Augustinian theology. This section will explore the early Protestant approach to the *Consensus Patrum* by looking at Luther, Calvin, and early Protestantism and explore the Augustinian and Western lens through which they approached the *consensus*.

The Reformer Martin Luther in many ways paved the way for the mindset Protestants later would bring to patristic interpretation. For Luther, the Fathers

⁸³ See Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition*, 75–78. Williams also notes that these collections were generally based on Latin compilations.

⁸⁴ Irena Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). 134–137.

⁸⁵ Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)*, 158ff.

⁸⁶ Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)*, 174.

⁸⁷ Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)*, 196–252.

were to be read solely as theological conversation partners. At times Luther listened to the Fathers because he generally considered them to be good scholars.⁸⁸ Yet, they held no more authority than Luther's own contemporaries and were simply "theological controversialists."⁸⁹ Luther saw the doctrine of justification by faith as core and critiqued the Fathers for not being as explicit about this as he would have liked.⁹⁰ Indeed, for Luther the Fathers could be corrected and parts of their theology could be entirely erroneous. Herein, as Schulze puts it, "[Luther] rendered an inestimable scholarly service to the church, to theology, and to historiography: He freed the Fathers from tradition. At long last it was possible for them to be mistaken."⁹¹ For Luther no Father was considered better or more authoritative than any other. Indeed, every Father could be mistaken and must be read simply as fellow theological scholars; each could be wrong and probably was at certain points. Only the Scriptures were to be held as authoritative. As such, Luther set the stage for later Protestant approaches to the Fathers, both evangelical and liberal.

For Calvin the Fathers should be viewed as slightly more authoritative than Luther, though still able to be erroneous. Indeed, for this Reformer the Fathers ought to be read as more than simply fellow scholars or readers of Scripture. There

⁸⁸ Manfred Schulze, "Martin Luther and the Church Fathers," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 613.

⁸⁹ Schulze, "Martin Luther and the Church Fathers," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 615.

⁹⁰ Schulze, "Martin Luther and the Church Fathers," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 609–613. Perhaps paving the way for the liberal critique of the Fathers.

⁹¹ Schulze, "Martin Luther and the Church Fathers," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 625.

were two elements to Calvin's reading of the Fathers: (1) The Fathers are to be judged in the light of Scripture and (2) Calvin's use of the Fathers was primarily polemical.

According to Lane, for Calvin Scripture is primarily authoritative and the Fathers were considered to be lesser authorities.⁹² Indeed, only Scripture is normative and the theological teaching of the Fathers must always be judged in the light of Scripture.⁹³ Therefore, when doing theology Calvin was always prepared, if necessary, to stand alone against the *consensus* of the Fathers but he never stood against Scripture.⁹⁴ Scripture was the only normative text for Calvin. Where the Fathers disagreed with Scripture it was the latter who trumped the former. Yet, he did view at least some of the Fathers as authoritative interpreters of Scripture.⁹⁵

Calvin's use of the Fathers, according to Lane, was primarily polemical.⁹⁶ Calvin used the Fathers when it served his own Reformed purpose, but mainly because "he genuinely believed them to support his cause."⁹⁷ As Calvin read the Fathers he saw them as ancient witnesses to the truth of Reformed theology and examples of theologians sharing the same convictions as he and his fellow Reformers. Herein, "Calvin's use of the Fathers was a masterly attempt to relate

⁹² Lane, *John Calvin*, 29.

⁹³ Lane, *John Calvin*, 35.

⁹⁴ Lane, *John Calvin*, 36.

⁹⁵ Lane, *John Calvin*, 29.

⁹⁶ See Lane, *John Calvin*, 3 for the second thesis of Calvin's use of the Fathers. See also Johannes van Oort, "John Calvin and the Church Fathers," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 697–699.

⁹⁷ Lane, *John Calvin*, 27–28.

Protestantism to historic Christianity and show how the Roman error had arisen.”⁹⁸

Thus, for Calvin, the Fathers were examples of early explicators of specific Reformed doctrines.

Calvin’s polemical use of the Fathers is portrayed in his prefatory address to King Francis in his *Institutes*. Here, Calvin depicts where he sees himself and his fellow Reformers standing, namely, in line with tradition and antiquity; it is the Roman Catholics who had departed.⁹⁹ In his words, “it is a calumny to represent us as opposed to the Fathers.”¹⁰⁰ Calvin believes that “there is much that is admirable and wise in those Fathers.”¹⁰¹ Yet, Calvin makes clear in the *Prefatory Address* that he considers the teaching of the Fathers helpful in places and extremely unhelpful in places. For him, it is essential to use their teachings only inasmuch as they are in agreement with Scripture.

For Calvin and the Reformed, there were certain Fathers that were more right and therefore to be used more authoritatively. Calvin’s view of the Fathers consists of some figures who were “in” and some who were “out.” He certainly had a few favorites such as John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria who he saw as the

⁹⁸ Lane, *John Calvin*, 54. However, as Lane helpfully points out, Calvin held a more static conception of doctrine whereas modern theological and patristic scholarship has shown that there are deeply rooted difference between the Reformers and the Fathers.

⁹⁹ Lane, *John Calvin*, 33.

¹⁰⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. John Thomas McNeill and Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), Prefatory Address.

¹⁰¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, Prefatory Address.

best explicators of biblical theology and commentators on the Bible.¹⁰² Indeed, Calvin cited Chrysostom very often in regards to Biblical exegesis. In addition, Calvin had great respect for the Cappadocian Fathers, especially Gregory Nazianzen¹⁰³ of whose Triadology he was particularly fond.¹⁰⁴ Calvin also deeply respected Hilary of Poitiers¹⁰⁵ and cited Irenaeus of Lyons often.¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, for the Calvin and the Protestant Reformers the church had a “golden age.” Calvin greatly respected the first four ecumenical councils¹⁰⁷ and he contended that there was a purer age of the church, namely the early centuries of Christianity.¹⁰⁸ For Calvin there was no specific date when the church fell from this purer age. Rather, Calvin understood there to have been a more gradual decline.¹⁰⁹ Here began a “pattern of decay” in the Protestant genealogy of church history.¹¹⁰

For Calvin and the Reformed, Augustine was central. Though definitely breaking with many elements of the Western Christianity of his time, Calvin continued in the tradition of viewing Augustine, at least implicitly, as the theologian

¹⁰² Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)*, 101ff; Oort, “John Calvin and the Church Fathers,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 693.

¹⁰³ Oort, “John Calvin and the Church Fathers,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 691.

¹⁰⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.13.17 citing Gregory Nazianzen *Sermon on Sacred Baptism*.

¹⁰⁵ Oort, “John Calvin and the Church Fathers,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 688.

¹⁰⁶ Oort, “John Calvin and the Church Fathers,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 685–686.

¹⁰⁷ Lane, *John Calvin*, 39–40.

¹⁰⁸ Lane, *John Calvin*, 40–41.

¹⁰⁹ Lane, *John Calvin*, 46.

¹¹⁰ A term taken from Georges Florovsky. See Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 110. Florovsky critiques Protestants as a whole for holding to this genealogy of church history. While this critique is no doubt valid as a general statement and can be seen in figures like Calvin, it is also a bit of a generalization.

par excellence. As Oort puts it, “without doubt [Augustine] was not only the most cited, but also the most appreciated church father for Calvin.”¹¹¹ Furthermore, Backus argues that there were ways, such as ecclesiology, wherein Augustine influenced the Reformed and Calvinists in an unacknowledged, but definitely present, fashion.¹¹² This emphasis on Augustine and Augustinian theological themes carried into later Protestant theology as well.¹¹³

However, Calvin and the other Reformers did not rely solely upon Augustine. Indeed, they turned to a plethora of sources from both the Greek East and Latin West.¹¹⁴ As van Oort notes, Calvin was particularly reliant upon Hilary of Poitiers for his doctrine of the Trinity.¹¹⁵ Additionally, Calvin was very fond of the Greek Fathers such as the Cappadocian Fathers and the Cyril of Alexandria.¹¹⁶

After the time of the Reformation there were a variety of approaches to the *consensus* in the west; the common denominator, however, was a use of Augustine and Augustinian theological themes. Later theologians standing within the Protestant tradition continued within this mindset and continued to read and study the Fathers from this perspective. However, they differed in many ways from their Roman Catholic predecessors. Some theologians vehemently disagreed with any

¹¹¹ Oort, “John Calvin and the Church Fathers,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 689.

¹¹² Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)*, 52.

¹¹³ Wells and Pinnock, eds., *Toward a Theology for the Future*, 128.

¹¹⁴ See Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)*, 61.

¹¹⁵ Oort, “John Calvin and the Church Fathers,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 688.

¹¹⁶ See Oort, “John Calvin and the Church Fathers,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 685–699 for a comprehensive overview of Calvin’s reading of many Greek Fathers.

type of numerical notion of the *Consensus Patrum* considering it to be Roman Catholic. Yet, they typically had a place for the theology of the Fathers¹¹⁷ and regarded the Fathers as reliable and authoritative theological sources and interpreters of Scripture.¹¹⁸

Once Protestantism had become more established in the west, their reading of the Fathers became more set and organized. Reformed theologians of later Calvinist theology attempted to provide a *via media* between the error of the Roman Catholic notion of the *consensus* and the Anti-Trinitarians who denied the patristic formulations of Trinity and Christology.¹¹⁹ Turretin, for example, points out that the Papists of his time held that “the Fathers are to be considered judges capable of deciding controversies of faith by their infallible authority” but the Reformed contend that “the Fathers are to be considered witnesses giving testimony of the consent of the ancient church and the opinion of the church in their own age.”¹²⁰ These Catholics argued that the collective teaching of the Fathers was to be considered authoritative and infallible. Turretin and the others wanted to preserve the Reformed doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* against the Catholics who conceived of the Fathers as infallible.

¹¹⁷ For example, Polanus, Webb, and Turretin. See E.P. Meijering, “The Fathers in Calvinist Orthodoxy: Systematic Theology,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 867–868.

¹¹⁸ For example, the 17th century Anglicans. See Jean-Louis Quantin, “The Fathers in Seventeenth Century Anglican Theology,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 990.

¹¹⁹ Meijering, “The Fathers in Calvinist Orthodoxy: Systematic Theology,” in Backus, ed., *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, 867–868. The examples of Polanus, Wolleb, and Turretin are provided.

¹²⁰ See Turretin, *Institutes of Elentic Theology*, II.21.6.

In response, Turretin argued that, contrary to the Catholic viewpoint, it is actually impossible to reach a numerical *consensus*.¹²¹ Furthermore, the Fathers (individually and collectively) were not prophets or apostles who had the gift of infallibility.¹²² They are no more than witnesses to the truth of Scripture. Turretin argued that the Fathers should only be viewed as witnesses to the truth. In viewing the Fathers as such Turretin stood in a long line of Protestant tradition in reading the Fathers.¹²³

Yet for these later Protestants, the Fathers were more than simply fellow theologians as they were for Luther, and more than early proponents of Reformed theology as they were for the Reformed; they were *testes veritatis* (witnesses to the truth).¹²⁴ For Turretin, Christians are to follow and listen to the Fathers, yet not place them on the same level as the Scriptures. Turretin held that the Fathers closest to the apostles are the purest.¹²⁵ Indeed, many of the Reformed saw themselves as following these Fathers' methods in many ways, for example in using

¹²¹ Turretin, *Institutes of Elentic Theology*, II. 21.16.

¹²² Turretin, *Institutes of Elentic Theology*, II.21.10.

¹²³ Meijering, "The Fathers in Calvinist Orthodoxy: Systematic Theology," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 868.

¹²⁴ Meijering, "The Fathers in Calvinist Orthodoxy: Systematic Theology," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 868.

¹²⁵ Turretin, *Institutes of Elentic Theology*, II.21.12. Turretin states: "Although some extend their age down to the tenth century, we do not think it ought to be carried down further than the sixth. For it is certain that purity of doctrine and worship became greatly corrupted after the sixth-hundredth year (in which the antichrist raised his head)—error and superstitions increasing by the just judgment of God." Thus, the Protestant "golden age" concept was carried on by Turretin. See Turretin, *Institutes of Elentic Theology*, II.21.3.

non-Biblical terminology in order to clarify Biblical concepts.¹²⁶ Turretin believed that the Fathers must not be given too much praise but also they must not be robbed of their due praise.¹²⁷

Much like Calvin, the later Reformed often saw the Fathers as early spokesmen of Protestant doctrines.¹²⁸ Indeed, many Reformed saw them as strong advocates of Reformed theology and the emphasis on grace. Thus, by the time of the solidification of Reformed and evangelical theology in the west, the Fathers were viewed as witnesses to the fact that the Protestant Reformation was a return to the ancient Christian tradition.

Philip Schaff carried this viewpoint forward and developed it substantially.¹²⁹ In his genealogy of church history, Schaff roots the Protestant churches solidly in the Western medieval tradition.¹³⁰ However, he distinguishes between Catholicism and Romanism. An extensive, but extremely illustrative quote, portrays Schaff's important view:

We must distinguish between Catholicism and Romanism. The former embraces the ancient Oriental church, the mediaeval church, and we may say, in a wider sense, all the modern evangelical churches. Romanism is the Latin church turned against the Reformation, consolidated by the Council of Trent and completed by the Vatican Council of 1870 with its dogma of papal absolutism and papal infallibility.

¹²⁶ Meijering, "The Fathers in Calvinist Orthodoxy: Systematic Theology," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 872. Though it is too much to say with Meijering that the Protestant Scholastic approach was closer to the Fathers than the earlier Reformed. See 884–885.

¹²⁷ Turretin, *Institutes of Elentic Theology*, II.21.17.

¹²⁸ Meijering, "The Fathers in Calvinist Orthodoxy: Systematic Theology," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 865.

¹²⁹ Wells and Pinnock, eds., *Toward a Theology for the Future*, 128.

¹³⁰ Philip Schaff, *History of the Church: Reformation A.D. 1517–1530* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1888), 1–4. Additionally, Schaff compared the importance of the Reformation to the importance of the first century and the split between East and West on the *filioque*.

Medieval Catholicism is evangelical, looking to the Reformation; modern Romanism is anti-evangelical, condemning the Reformation, yet holding with unyielding tenacity the ecumenical doctrines once sanctioned, and doing this all the more by virtue of its claim to infallibility.¹³¹

Thus, in his view of the historical development of the church, Schaff drew a sharp distinction between “Catholicism” and “Romanism.” He saw the Reformed and evangelical churches as catholic and the churches under Rome as “Romanists.” Furthermore, he saw Romanism as medieval Catholicism taken to its extreme form.¹³²

Schaff hoped for an age of ecumenical rapprochement called “evangelical catholicism.” Schaff saw evangelical catholicism as in line with the ancient church.¹³³ Herein, Schaff strongly rejected Protestant “sectarianism” which he believed was the perennial temptation and struggle of Protestantism.¹³⁴ Schaff unpacks this viewpoint in his text, *The Principle of Protestantism*.¹³⁵ In order to reach this age of ecumenical rapprochement, Schaff proposed a charitable study of church history.¹³⁶

The Protestant Reformation was, therefore, a return to the witness of the classical church Fathers. For the first generation Reformers like Calvin and also the later Protestants like Turretin, there existed some sort of ecclesiastical “golden age” following which the church fell away into varying levels of heresy and the cry of the

¹³¹ Schaff, *History of the Church: Reformation A.D. 1517–1530*, 4. The language has been slightly updated.

¹³² Schaff, *History of the Church: Reformation A.D. 1517–1530*, 5.

¹³³ George Shriver, *Philip Schaff: Christian Scholar and Ecumenical Prophet* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 112.

¹³⁴ Shriver, *Philip Schaff*, 22.

¹³⁵ Shriver, *Philip Schaff*, 22–23. Notably, Charles Hodge reviewed this work positively. See p. 23.

¹³⁶ Shriver, *Philip Schaff*, 96.

day for the Reformers was not only to return to Scripture but to faithfulness to this ecclesiastical “golden age.”¹³⁷ Granted, the Reformers were limited in the Fathers which they had available owing to available editions and were more informed by Western Fathers such as Augustine; however, they indeed returned to the classical Greek Fathers as well, seeing the patristic tradition as evidence that the Protestant community was a continuation of the ancient church. However, this approach would soon change.

1.5 The Liberal and Biblicist approaches of 19th and 20th century

Protestantism

Though the Reformers returned to the Fathers they failed to outline any sort of objective guideline for appropriation of the Fathers and Protestant evangelicals have subsequently avoided the Fathers due, further, to both medieval Catholicism and modern liberalism.¹³⁸ Accordingly, in the words of Geoffrey Bromiley, “patristics is one of the most neglected areas in evangelical theology.”¹³⁹ Despite the fact that the Protestant Reformation was nothing less than an attempt at a

¹³⁷ Kenneth Stewart states: “The current resurgence of interest in early Christianity is *not* a swing of the pendulum towards something neglected for the five centuries of Protestantism’s existence. It is in fact a return to emphases *regularly* present in historic Protestantism. See K. J. Stewart, “Evangelicalism and Patristic Christianity: 1517 to the Present,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 80 (2008): 309; In his article Stewart traces Protestant evangelical use of the Fathers from the 16th to the 20th century. See p. 309–319. Though Stewart convincingly argues for the essential connection between patristic theology and the Reformers and points to examples of evangelical usage of the Fathers since the Reformation he fails to successfully portray returning to the Fathers as indeed a part of what it meant to be evangelical following the Reformation. Indeed, a Biblicist approach developed that was essentially the opposite. See below.

¹³⁸ Though, as Bromiley helpfully puts it “one should not overdraw the picture.” He notes Philip Schaff’s patristic scholarship as well as the more general appreciation of Augustine in Reformed theology, both of which this chapter has discussed. See Wells and Pinnock, eds., *Toward a Theology for the Future*, 128.

¹³⁹ Wells and Pinnock, eds., *Toward a Theology for the Future*, 125.

return to the Fathers and the patristic “golden age” as the Reformers saw it, following the first generation Reformers and their immediate followers, the Protestant appropriation of the Greek Fathers turned into one of two approaches. Protestants either viewed the Greek Fathers via the liberal Protestant lens of separating the “kernel” from the “chaff” or via the fundamentalist and Biblicist interpretation of the Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura*, essentially ignoring the theological tradition from which they arose.¹⁴⁰ These opposing approaches paved the way for evangelicals to “discover” the Greek Fathers.

In many ways, Rudolf Bultmann encapsulates the liberal Protestant theological methodology towards both the Bible and the Fathers. Herein he provides an example of the methodology of the liberal Protestant approach to written theological sources. Bultmann did not look at the Fathers as directly as theologians such as Adolf von Harnack did, yet he did have, more broadly, a reading of the theological tradition. For Bultmann, the key to theological interpretation is “de-mythologizing.”

De-mythologizing is the process of looking for the existential message of the Gospel within the worldview in which it was embedded. According to David Fergusson, “it seeks to bring out the real intention of myth...”¹⁴¹ Fergusson lucidly portrays how this worked itself out in Bultmann by a comparison of Barth to

¹⁴⁰ Though as Stewart aptly puts it: “Extremely liberal segments of Protestant Christianity in the twentieth century—those which allowed to be called into question the virginal conception of Jesus, his physical resurrection three days after death and his personal return at the end of this age—cannot be thought to have taken very seriously the early ecumenical councils or the theological consensus of early Christianity.” See Stewart, “Evangelicalism and Patristic Christianity,” 308.

¹⁴¹ David Fergusson, *Bultmann*, (London: Chapman, 1992), 108.

Bultmann. According to Fergusson, for Barth the life, death and resurrection of Christ is intrinsically significant; for Bultmann it is only significant as it was existentially encountered in the present.”¹⁴²

Adolf von Harnack, the famed historian of dogma is perhaps the clearest example of the liberal Protestant approach to the Greek Fathers.¹⁴³ Harnack was faithful to the general liberal methodology as exemplified in Bultmann and, following this methodology, he had a certain approach to the Fathers, especially the Greek Fathers. Harnack saw certain Fathers as more “in” than others. Furthermore, for him, a core to theological history exists containing key theological assertions. Harnack saw the job of the theologian and historian of dogma to be to extract this “kernel” from the “chaff.”

For Harnack, the history of dogma should be divided into two main parts: (1) the origin of dogma and (2) the development of dogma. Furthermore, he argued that the East was focused on theology and Christology whereas the West was focused on faith, sin, and grace.¹⁴⁴ According to Harnack, the history of dogma, therefore, has a twofold task: (1) to present the Roman Catholic doctrine as a “product of the ecclesiastical development of the middle ages” and (2) “to portray the conservative nature of Protestantism.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Fergusson, *Bultmann*, 118–119. This is why Bultmann agreed with Barth’s dialectical project in *Romans*. However, for Bultmann the dialectic was only significant as it was experienced in the life of the believer. See p. 22.

¹⁴³ Though, as Bromiley notes, liberalism has unquestionably “produced some of the finest patristic work of the modern period.” Yet, liberal presuppositions are “readily enough perceived.” See Wells and Pinnock, eds., *Toward a Theology for the Future*, 128.

¹⁴⁴ Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1894), vol. 1, 5.

¹⁴⁵ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 1, 6.

For Harnack, doctrine developed both positively and negatively. Arianism and Papism, for example, were negative developments. They emerged and were erroneous and need to be removed by the theologian. For him, much of doctrine and historical Christianity is the “Hellenization of the Gospel” and the application of Greek thought to Biblical concepts.¹⁴⁶ The key in dogmatics is thus to always search deeply for “Jesus Christ and his Gospel”¹⁴⁷ and to distinguish the “kernel and husk.”¹⁴⁸ Indeed, while the language and even thought of the Gospel was done in the cultural framework of its time, the kernel could be preserved owing to its permanent validity.¹⁴⁹ Thus, theology is searching for the “Gospel in the Gospel” and looking for the core “Christian idea.”¹⁵⁰

Harnack had a particular fondness for Athanasius of Alexandria.¹⁵¹ For Harnack, Athanasius was in many ways a theologian from which his own German liberal tradition emerged. He contended that Athanasius saved the church and preserved the core of the Gospel: “Fellowship of God with man” for in Harnack’s words, “the entire Faith, everything in defense of which Athanasius staked his life, is described in one sentence: *God himself has entered into humanity.*”¹⁵² This core

¹⁴⁶ See Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1901), 207–209, for example.

¹⁴⁷ Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, 10.

¹⁴⁸ Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, 12.

¹⁴⁹ Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, 12–14.

¹⁵⁰ Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, 14–15.

¹⁵¹ Harnack, as John Behr helpfully puts it, “...admired Athanasius, for while he might have ‘erased every trait of the historical Jesus of Nazareth’ (whatever that meant to Harnack), Athanasius nevertheless ‘saved the character of Christianity as a religion of the living fellowship with God.’” Behr, *The Nicene Faith: Part I*, 165 citing Harnack, *History of Dogma* vol. 4, 45. See also vol. 4, 26 where Harnack elaborates upon his view that Athanasius’ theology was rooted in soteriology, a soteriology of union between God and man.

¹⁵² Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 26, italics original.

teaching was, to use Bultmann's language, the "existential truth" embedded in the Christian myth.

Central to Harnack's reading of the 4th century is that while Athanasius' theology did not hold a place for the historical Jesus of Nazareth, he preserved what Harnack viewed as the core of the Christian religion: Union between God and man. Other external and mythological developments were simply "Hellenization" of the Gospel. For example, Harnack saw Arianism as something new and Athanasius as preserving the core of the faith of the church before him¹⁵³ and argued that the Cappadocian Fathers departed from the more Athanasian and traditional Nicene tradition.¹⁵⁴ Though the history of dogma contains mostly "Hellenization" for Harnack, there are figures such as Athanasius of Alexandria who preserved the core of Christianity and the Gospel: Fellowship of God with man. For, according to Harnack, "the Christian religion is something simple and sublime; it means one thing and one thing only: Eternal life in the midst of time, by the strength and under the eyes of God."¹⁵⁵ However, for the most part the church Fathers had blurred the clear existential kernel of the biblical Gospel. Thus, the job of a theologian reading the Fathers consisted of removing this "chaff" in order to extract the "kernel."

¹⁵³ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 4, 22.

¹⁵⁴ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 83–107. This was the departure of the Neo-Nicenes from the Old-Nicenes.

¹⁵⁵ Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, 8.

A number of other theologians approached the Fathers via this lens. R.P.C. Hanson, the famed patristics scholar wrote a number of texts in this vein.¹⁵⁶ Hanson held to the “development of doctrine.” He saw orthodoxy as a process of trial and error. Indeed for him orthodoxy was “found” not “maintained.”¹⁵⁷ He states, “the story is the story of how orthodoxy was reached, found, not of how it was maintained.”¹⁵⁸ Charles Kannengiesser is also in the liberal tradition of reading the *consensus*. He believed that Athanasius was an example of a theologian who should be followed in style and method today but not necessarily in substance. For Kannengiesser the principles and beliefs of the early church must not be followed today—thus theologians cannot use the Fathers like Newman did—rather knowledge of the early church can help the church today in moving forward away from the backward views held during the patristic era. Maurice Wiles viewed orthodoxy in much the same way as R.P.C. Hanson. For, like Hanson, he saw it as a development and in his view orthodoxy was “made.”¹⁵⁹ Wiles’ text *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Through the Centuries*¹⁶⁰ argues that Arianism as traditionally presented was in fact a polemical invention of Athanasius. In reality, Wiles argued, Arianism held to the divinity of Christ but simply in a different way than the

¹⁵⁶ Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988) and Hanson’s article in Rowan Williams, ed., *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), for example.

¹⁵⁷ Williams, *The Making of Orthodoxy*, 142–146; Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 848.

¹⁵⁸ Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 870.

¹⁵⁹ See Maurice F. Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine: A Study in the Principles of Early Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

¹⁶⁰ Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Through the Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Nicenes. Thus, he states: “Even if Arianism is a sowing of tares among the orthodox wheat, the uprooting of the tares is in danger of damaging the wheat also.”¹⁶¹

For the liberal tradition, as in Harnack and Bultmann, the church Fathers in general and the Greek Fathers in particular were subject to the critique of Hellenization and mythologizing. However, there were great figures (such as Athanasius for Harnack) who preserved the kernel of the “Christian idea” in their theology and who, after a process of de-mythologizing and removing the chaff, could be retrieved. Ultimately, figures like Harnack from the liberal tradition indeed have provided much to be appreciated from a historical perspective but also have caused serious theological problems inasmuch as they simply read their own liberal and existentialist “de-Hellenizing” tradition back into the Fathers.¹⁶²

On the opposite end of the spectrum, and most likely a Protestant Reformation “throwing of the baby out with the bath water” in response to either medieval Roman Catholicism¹⁶³ or 19th and 20th century liberal Protestantism, was the Biblicist and fundamentalist avoidance of any aspect of tradition. Stephen Holmes paints this mindset as holding the commitment that:

God has given us his truth in the Bible, our job is to live it and proclaim it, what other people may or may not have thought about it in the past is of no interest to us, that they were generally wrong is evident from the poor state of the ‘traditional’ churches.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 182.

¹⁶² Sara Parvis says that much of patristic scholarship from this age was “ineluctably Hegelian.” See Sara Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy 325–345* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

¹⁶³ Perhaps the focus on the numerical *Consensus Patrum*.

¹⁶⁴ Stephen R. Holmes, *Listening to the Past: The Place of Tradition in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), x.

These Protestants (often evangelicals) have bought into Georges Florovsky's "pattern of decay" reading of the patristic era discussed earlier in this chapter. As Bromiley helpfully puts it:

As they seem to see it, the patristic age brought a rapid declension from apostolic Christianity. From at least the early second century, doctrines and practices developed that swept the church into a movement which culminated in the Middle Ages and which still continues in Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and the Coptic Church. The Reformation represented a return to biblical Christianity but, in the eyes of some, even this was an imperfect return both theologically and practically. Hence the patristic appeal of the Reformers might be construed as a point of weakness rather than of strength...Granted this type of interpretation, there is obviously little to be learned from the Fathers.¹⁶⁵

This viewpoint is the traditional Protestant and Reformed view of an "ecclesiastical golden age" intensified to its extreme in response to medieval Roman Catholicism and Protestant liberalism.

By the time of the 20th century these two opposing views (liberal and fundamentalist) set the parameters of potential approaches to the Fathers. This polarized situation typically left evangelicals in complete ignorance of the patristic tradition and set the stage for evangelicals to "discover" the Fathers. On account of this, the 20th century has witnessed a movement of *ressourcement* among Protestant evangelicals. Nevertheless, the outcome of this discovery of the Fathers has been varying amongst evangelicals.

¹⁶⁵ Wells and Pinnock, eds., *Toward a Theology for the Future*, 127.

1.6 Protestant Evangelical Theologies of Retrieval

In his article entitled *Theologies of Retrieval*¹⁶⁶ John Webster argues that there is a movement of *ressourcement* in contemporary theology wherein theologians are returning to classical theological sources by which to inform the present theological condition. For Webster, theologies of retrieval, though differing from one another in many ways, especially regarding a “genealogy of modernity,” all share the view that modern and contemporary Christian theology has wrongly separated theology both from its object and the classical theologians of the past who were considerably more theologically objective.¹⁶⁷ Accordingly, theologies of retrieval attempt to return theological reflection to its objective and realist focus by means of using classical theologians from the past who were more objectively focused.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, theologians of retrieval work to safeguard theology from “the constraints of circumstance” and refocus theology on “the object of Christian doctrine, God.”¹⁶⁹

Webster has a number of critiques of theologies of retrieval.¹⁷⁰ One such critique concerns how theologians of retrieval choose their sources. As he points

¹⁶⁶ Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. Webster, Tanner, and Torrance, 583–599. Though, Webster admits, “theologies of retrieval’...is simply a convenience in absence of a better designation...” See page 584.

¹⁶⁷ Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. Webster, Tanner, and Torrance, 584.

¹⁶⁸ Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” in Webster, Tanner, and Torrance, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. Webster, Tanner, and Torrance, 590.

¹⁶⁹ Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. Webster, Tanner, and Torrance, 594.

¹⁷⁰ Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. Webster, Tanner, and Torrance, 596–597.

out throughout his article, the plethora of different theologians of retrieval have diverse “sources of choice.” Seemingly if all theologians of retrieval are as objective and realist as Webster surmises there should not be as much discrepancy among them regarding sources. This section will argue that all theologies of retrieval are not, in fact, as entirely objectively focused as Webster’s article would suggest. Furthermore, not all theologians of retrieval effectively remain faithful to their own tradition while retrieving the Fathers. The argument shall emerge that Torrance’s Christologically objective and evangelically informed method of retrieval centred upon the *ὁμοούσιον* and informed by a personal notion of grace (which the remaining chapters of this thesis shall focus upon) is an example for Protestant and evangelical theologians wishing to return to and appropriate the Greek Fathers in an objective manner while remaining faithful to their own tradition.

The ecclesiastical and cultural climate of Torrance’s time was absolutely ripe for a return to the classical church Fathers; indeed it still is today. Earlier in this chapter it was argued that although the Protestant Reformation was a return to the Fathers and to the faith and practice of the early Christian church, the Reformers failed to provide a consensual and detailed objective guide for appropriation of the Fathers other than, perhaps, reading them in submission to the Scriptures. However, during the past thirty to fifty years (and even more recent as “Generation X” Christians have grown into adulthood) the prevailing paradigm has shifted from modernism to postmodernism and evangelical Christians have

been returning to classical Christianity in hordes.¹⁷¹ One reporter, Tom Breen, reports that about one-third of all Orthodox priests in the U.S. and about 43% of Orthodox seminarians are converts.¹⁷²

This chapter has argued that immediately preceding movements of retrieval, liberal de-Hellenization and Biblicist avoidance of the Fathers was the approach of much of 20th century evangelical theology and, accordingly, the Fathers were basically ignored, at least in popular evangelical piety. It is out of this latter group of Christians that the contemporary return to and retrieval of classical patristic theology has emerged. While this version of Protestant Christianity does not always exist in textbook theology¹⁷³ it is best represented in the writings of those figures so dissatisfied with their own tradition that they converted to another.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, this approach has not existed so much in writing as in practice of popular evangelical piety. The fundamentalist approach to the Fathers is generally found within those groups that have an extremely narrow interpretation of the

¹⁷¹ See Colleen Carroll, *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002). Carroll documents this return across denominational boundaries. Though this trend really began a century earlier with John Henry Newman as was hinted at earlier and will be explored more fully below.

¹⁷² See Tom Breen, "More Americans Join Orthodox Christian Churches," *USA Today, Religion Section* (January 11, 2007), http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2007-01-11-orthodox_x.htm (accessed November 2012).

¹⁷³ Because with the exception of highly fundamentalist theologians most scholars still looked to the Fathers such as Augustine.

¹⁷⁴ In the words of Stewart: "We must be frank in admitting that such writers have reached their conclusions on the basis of perceptions gleaned within the strands of Evangelicalism in which they were nurtured." See Stewart, "Evangelicalism and Patristic Christianity: 1517 to the Present," 308. He later puts it: "The neglect of the early Church and its teaching is a relatively modern phenomenon, afflicting both conservative and liberal Protestantism for a period of some decades early in the twentieth century, and waning since the 1950s." See p. 320. The point being that ignorance of classical Christianity is not a Protestant principle; indeed the opposite is the case. The Protestant Reformation was a return to classical Christianity. The ignorance of tradition has only occurred in twentieth century Protestantism and is entirely un-Protestant.

Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura*. Regardless, over the past half century to century (if not longer) evangelicals have generally avoided the church Fathers, at least in practice if not formally.¹⁷⁵

There have been a plethora of examples of Protestants who have converted to Roman Catholicism or to Eastern Orthodoxy after their “discovery” of the Greek Fathers including Jaroslav Pelikan who became Eastern Orthodox after a life as a Lutheran historian of dogma,¹⁷⁶ Peter Gillquist who along with a large group from the evangelical parachurch organization Campus Crusade for Christ became Antiochene Orthodox,¹⁷⁷ and, of course, John Henry Newman who became Roman Catholic.¹⁷⁸ These groups fairly consistently depict their tradition, at least in practice if not formally, as ignoring all aspects of Christian tradition, especially Eastern. What opened the eyes of these Protestants? What allowed them to “discover” classical Christianity?

Theologians have noted that during the past thirty years or so the church has experienced what sociologists have termed the cultural shift from the

¹⁷⁵ Holmes notes that Protestantism has seen itself in line with tradition throughout its history and though there was a short denial of this during the enlightenment, Protestantism resumed the earlier mindset in 19th century with, for example, Schleiermacher, even while totally changing tradition, seeing himself in line with it. See Holmes, *Listening to the Past*, 2. Though, as this chapter pointed out earlier, the Protestant liberal tradition clearly saw itself in line with tradition in a much different way than the Reformers, namely, looking to some figures (e.g. Athanasius for Harnack) who preserved the “core” of the Gospel in a Christianity that had largely been “Hellenized.”

¹⁷⁶ See Stewart, “Evangelicalism and Patristic Christianity,” 307. This is indeed a generalization for, of course, Pelikan cannot be said to have “discovered” the Fathers as he was a very influential historian of dogma.

¹⁷⁷ See Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox* and Peter E. Gillquist, ed., *Coming Home* (Ben Lomond: Conciliar Press, 2006).

¹⁷⁸ John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, Reprint (London: The Catholic Book Club, 1946).

“modern”¹⁷⁹ to the “postmodern”¹⁸⁰ mindset. Accordingly, the door has been opened towards a return to the classical Christian tradition. The modern to postmodern paradigm shift has brought about a change in Christianity in a multiplicity of regards and many evangelical theologians have noted the influence of this shift upon the church.¹⁸¹ However, relevant to this study, the paradigm broke the evangelical church out of a-historical individualism.¹⁸²

Robert Webber, the late Wheaton theologian, has commented on the postmodern opening of the door. He argues that the mindset and cultural milieu of postmodernism is similar to that of the early Christian Fathers and thus has traced

¹⁷⁹ Generally considered to be dualist, rationalist, individualist, and objective.

¹⁸⁰ Generally considered to be holistic, sensual, communal, and subjective/relativist.

¹⁸¹ Scot McKnight states: “Living as a Christian in a postmodern context means different things to different people. Some...will minister *to* postmoderns, others *with* postmoderns, and still others *as* postmoderns. David Wells at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary falls into the *to* category, seeing postmoderns as trapped in moral relativism and epistemological bankruptcy out of which they must be rescued. Others minister *with* postmoderns. That is, they live with, work with, and converse with postmoderns, accepting their postmodernity as a fact of life in our world. Such Christians view postmodernity as a present condition into which we are called to proclaim and live out the gospel.” See Scot McKnight, “Five Streams of the Emerging Church: Key Elements of the Most Controversial and Misunderstood Movement in the Church Today,” *Christianity Today* (January 19, 2007) 3, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/february/11.35.html> (accessed November 2012).

¹⁸² Though this is generally true across national and cultural borders, it should be noted that evangelicalism’s a-historical individualism is, in many ways, more of a North American phenomenon. As Alistair McGrath points out, evangelicalism in Britain has a stronger common mindset of “family history” because of the fact that evangelicalism has usually existed within the mainline churches (as opposed to parachurch organizations as in North America). Thus, British evangelicalism sees itself going back to the 18th century revivals and even the patristic era. Owing to this difference, the North American Christians have witnessed a trend towards mass conversion to, for example, Eastern Orthodoxy, because of their sense of history. This is not as common in Britain. See Alistair McGrath, “Trinitarian Theology” in *Where Shall My Wond’ring Soul Begin?: The Landscape of Evangelical Piety and Thought*, eds. Mark A. Noll and Ronald F. Thiemann, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 52. Notably, McGrath went on to argue that the common strand to all of Christian tradition is the doctrine of the Trinity; he proposed a return to this classic doctrine as a way forward to Christian ecumenism based on common tradition. See p. 55–60.

a significant number of postmodern Christians returning to classical Christianity.¹⁸³

According to Webber, Christians in the postmodern world with postmodern yearnings and a postmodern mindset find the classical Fathers of Christianity attractive owing to a shared mindset, shared surrounding culture, and the sense of historical authority. Webber traced and predicted further retrievals of the classical Christian tradition and figures by the postmodern Christian generation.¹⁸⁴

The latter half of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century has seen a paradigm shift from modernism to postmodernism which opened the door for evangelicals to return to classical Christianity. Accordingly, during this time there has been a resurgence of patristic studies among evangelicals. Indeed, there has been a move towards *ressourcement* within evangelicalism, in which Torrance has played and continues to play an influential role. This may be a sign of something big. As Webber puts it, “throughout history a revived interest in the insights of the early church has usually been accompanied by significant renewal in the church.”¹⁸⁵ Thus, it seems highly probable that the current trend towards the classical church Fathers signifies Christianity is currently on the brink of important revival, making Torrance highly relevant as a figure to be uplifted as an example.

¹⁸³ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 21–22; 27. Webber notes the switch from dualism to holism and rationalism to mystery in addition to ambiguity, community, interrelationship of all things, symbolism, and emphasis on the visual. See p. 35. He says: ““Classical Christianity speaks to a holistic and integrated view of life,” which, Webber contends, is what the postmodern generation loves. See p. 27.

¹⁸⁴ This is not to equate postmodernism with *ressourcement*. Rather, postmodernism opened the door for *ressourcement* by breaking Western Christianity out of a prevailing individualist a-historical mindset.

¹⁸⁵ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 34.

Currently evangelicals are returning to classical Christianity in great masses.¹⁸⁶ In her recent journalistic study, Colleen Carroll has documented this current trend towards traditional Christianity. By means of interviews, surveys, and significant study, Carroll has chronicled that currently there is indeed a strong trend amongst younger Christians towards traditional Christianity. In her words: “Amid the swirl of spiritual, religious, and moral choices that exist in American culture today, many young adults are opting for the tried-and-true worldview of Christian orthodoxy.”¹⁸⁷

As young adults from “Generation X” and beyond turn to traditional Christianity they choose classical Christian authorities such as the classical Fathers and classical Christian forms of devotion and worship.¹⁸⁸ Throughout her important book Carroll records countless instances of Christians from all denominations (and none) returning to classical Christian figures, theology, morality, and practice. Carroll reports that huge numbers of Christians have been converting from evangelical churches to Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. In fact, Carroll points out that according to a recent Roman Catholic survey, 61% of Roman Catholic converts (of those surveyed) had converted to

¹⁸⁶ Regarding the current trend, one newspaper reporter notes: “Now about one-third of all U.S. Orthodox priests are converts — and that number is likely to grow, according to Alexei D. Krindatch, research director at the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute in Berkeley, California. A 2006 survey of the four Orthodox seminaries in the country found that about 43% of seminarians are converts, Krindatch said.” Breen, “More Americans Join Orthodox Christian Churches.”

¹⁸⁷ Carroll, *The New Faithful*, 15. As one interviewee puts it: “They’re rebelling against the rebellion...they want tradition.” See p. 36. Carroll notes that the form of this trend is not uniform. Some have become Eastern Orthodox, some Roman Catholic, some have returned to conservative evangelicalism. However, there are shared characteristics, namely, a desire for mystery, guidance from trustworthy sources of authority, and a way to engage culture. See pp. 15–16.

¹⁸⁸ Carroll, *The New Faithful*, 63.

Catholicism from other Christian denominations and, on the Eastern Orthodox side, from 1967–1997, the number of American parishes associated with the Antiochene Archdiocese in North America, the Eastern Orthodox church attracting the majority of North American protestant converts to Eastern Orthodoxy, tripled in the number of parishes.¹⁸⁹

A typical North American timeline is that of Peter Gillquist¹⁹⁰ or Thomas Howard,¹⁹¹ starting out as an evangelical often involved in parachurch ministry, a “discovery” of the early church, the subsequent conclusion that “evangelicalism is not enough” (to use Howard’s language), and, finally, a conversion to the Roman Catholic (Howard) or Eastern Orthodox (Gillquist) Church.

Carroll puts forward the contention that for contemporary young adult Christians, tradition is “sexy and exotic.”¹⁹² These Christians crave classical elements such as mystery, paradox, and Gregorian or Byzantine chant. Indeed, Carroll attributes parts of these desires to “Generation X” Christians love for the classical Christian counter-cultural attitude. One of Carroll’s interviewees noted that more and more young Christians are attracted by classical counter-cultural forms of Christian piety such as monasticism.¹⁹³

Carroll’s study has shown that many Christians who have grown up in Protestant evangelicalism are attracted to the liturgical and sacramental life of

¹⁸⁹ Carroll, *The New Faithful*, 64.

¹⁹⁰ See Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*.

¹⁹¹ See Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*; Thomas Howard, *Lead, Kindly Light: My Journey to Rome* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004).

¹⁹² Carroll, *The New Faithful*, 83.

¹⁹³ Carroll, *The New Faithful*, 91.

Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. The rich liturgy and the emphasis on the importance and substance of Communion and Baptism proves attractive to many who have grown up in traditions that view the sacraments as subsidiary to preaching and evangelism due, in part, to a “memorial” sacramental theology which views the sacraments as lacking substance.¹⁹⁴ Regardless of the specific attraction to ancient Christianity, Carroll’s study has sociologically documented the movement of *ressourcement* in which this thesis is arguing Torrance plays an important role.

1.7 Three outcomes of evangelical Theologies of Retrieval

There have been, generally, three outcomes to Protestant evangelical retrievals of the Greek Fathers. First, that exemplified by John Henry Newman, Thomas Howard, and Peter Gillquist, namely, the “discovery” of classical Christianity and the conclusion that contemporary Protestantism is not a faithful continuation (or, at least, not the most faithful) of the early church and, accordingly, conversion to either the Roman Catholic Church or the Eastern Orthodox Church. The second type is a more subjective and relative appropriation of the classical Greek Fathers, exemplified by the Emergent/Emerging church, and, though their intentions are good, they lack a consistent objective basis. This group tends to choose their favorite patristic figures and themes based on a (usually subjectively chosen) theme of selection. The third response, which could be broadly labeled

¹⁹⁴ For example, this was one of the reasons Thomas Howard converted. See Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*. Notably, it does not always entail conversion. See, e.g., Dan Kimball’s book about incorporating these elements into “Emerging Churches” in Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).

“evangelical,” is exemplified by Torrance as well as others such as Thomas Oden, Robert Webber, and Stephen Holmes who retrieve the classical church Fathers and appropriate them into their own tradition and context by means of Christological and evangelical appropriation. It will be argued that this third response has the strongest merit owing to its Christo-centrism and objectivism/realism in addition to its faithfulness to the Fathers from within their own tradition but that Torrance’s has much from which they can learn, and therefore Torrance has been and should continue to be used as a legitimate and helpful guide for Protestant, evangelical, and Reformed appropriation of classical Christianity.

There are numerous figures that have recently converted to Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy from Protestant denominations. Indeed, especially in the North American context, it is a growing trend for Protestant evangelicals to “discover” the Greek Fathers and subsequently conclude that the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox communions are the only (or at least more faithful) expression of the church and theology of the church Fathers.¹⁹⁵ Numerous books on this topic abound such as those entitled “Evangelical Is Not Enough”¹⁹⁶ and “Coming Home”¹⁹⁷ which describe Protestant evangelical Christians who, having discovered the church of the Greek Fathers, conclude evangelical Christianity, though good as far as it goes, is simply “not enough.”

¹⁹⁵ Though it is not exclusive to North America. See e.g. Michael Harper, *The True Light: An Evangelical's Journey to Orthodoxy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997). Harper was a major evangelical figure in the charismatic movement within the Church of England who converted to Eastern Orthodoxy and became an Orthodox priest. His reasons for conversion were primarily doctrinal and he saw the Church of England as having fallen into theological liberalism.

¹⁹⁶ Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*.

¹⁹⁷ Gillquist, *Coming Home*.

The mindset of Protestants whose return to the Greek Fathers results in conversion to Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy is because of their belief that they had found the fruition of the ecclesiastical “golden age” of the Fathers. While their conversion was no doubt owing to pious convictions and they cannot be faulted for this, this section will argue that their conversion was unnecessary and these groups are open to two critiques: (1) Buying into the falsehood of the “golden age” conception and (2) an objectivity centered upon external theological systems as opposed to Christ and his Gospel.

In order to explore and draw out these arguments this section will focus on a selection of case studies: John Henry Newman who converted to Roman Catholicism after life in the Church of England and a selection of North American evangelicals who have converted to Eastern Orthodoxy in recent decades, most notably Peter Gillquist and the Campus Crusade for Christ.

John Henry Newman, recently beatified in 2010 by the Roman Catholic Church, was the figure who, in many ways, represents the modern return to the Greek Fathers in general and Athanasius of Alexandria in particular. Newman represents those Protestants who, after returning to the Greek Fathers, conclude that their own tradition is not the true and most faithful continuation of the church of the Fathers.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Bromiley helpfully notes that the Oxford Movement and Anglo-Catholicism appealed to the Fathers for practices that were abandoned with the Reformation. As shall be explored, Newman ultimately concluded that contemporary Protestantism was inconsistent with what he saw in early Christianity. Others, such as Kenneth Kirk adopted such things as Apostolic Succession and Dix developed a view of the liturgy that looked more Roman Catholic than Anglican. Thus, the Anglo-Catholic movement is more in line with the stream of figures who, upon returning to the classical

Newman had a certain view, discussed earlier, which he called “the development of doctrine” and which ultimately led the Oxford theologian to become Roman Catholic.¹⁹⁹ Newman held that one could not understand the early Fathers without the later Fathers and from here began to understand doctrine as having developed throughout the patristic era.²⁰⁰ After a life of indwelling the life and theology of the Fathers²⁰¹ Newman arrived at the conclusion that “modern Catholicism is nothing else but simply the legitimate growth and complement that is the natural and necessary development of the doctrine of the early church.”²⁰² Thus Newman’s famous phrase: “to be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant.”²⁰³ In fact, Newman resolves: “Were Athanasius to come to life he would undoubtedly recognize the Catholic Church as his own communion.”²⁰⁴ This viewpoint caused Newman to convert to Roman Catholicism after a life in the Church of England. In his mind, Roman Catholicism, not Protestantism, is the

Fathers, convert because their expression of Christianity looks less like evangelicalism and more like Roman Catholicism. Bromiley helpfully elaborates that the Anglo-Catholic method of appropriation tends to read modern views (specifically Catholic) into the Fathers and sees Roman Catholicism as the faithful expression of patristic Christianity thusly either converting or adopting more Roman Catholic practices (e.g. liturgy, Apostolic Succession, etc.). See Bromiley’s article in Wells and Pinnock, eds., *Toward a Theology for the Future*. See further Robert Webber and Donald G. Bloesch, *The Orthodox Evangelicals: Who they are and what they are saying* (Nashville: Nelson, 1978), 130–131.

¹⁹⁹ Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 132–133; 157–158. As Newman worked through writing the text he says his “difficulties so cleared away that [he] ceased to speak of “the Roman Catholics,” and boldly called them Catholics.” See p. 158. Ultimately Newman concludes: “Modern Rome was in truth ancient Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople.” See p. 133.

²⁰⁰ King, *Newman and the Alexandrian Fathers*, 51–52.

²⁰¹ Newman says that he had an early devotion to the Fathers and that from an early age he was convinced that the religion of the Fathers was that of the primitive Christians. See Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 4; 17.

²⁰² Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 123.

²⁰³ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 6.

²⁰⁴ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 71.

faithful development of the ancient church.²⁰⁵

When he became a Roman Catholic Newman felt as if he was “coming into port after a rough sea.”²⁰⁶ Newman, who had indwelt the life and theology of the Greek Fathers for such a long time desiring to see his own Anglican tradition as faithful to them, ultimately concluded that the Church of England was not the communion of such great heroes of the faith as Athanasius but that in order to join with their tradition he must become Roman Catholic, the development of the church of antiquity. Newman’s famous journey to the Roman Catholic communion has much to teach contemporary Christians and he is indeed an example to be revered and from whom much can be learned.

Newman held that the Fathers were correct in their interpretation because (a) they were nearer to the apostles in time, (b) they conserved the traditions, and (c) they were pious.²⁰⁷ Here, Newman was clearly committed to the “golden age” notion embedded within Protestantism. Newman perhaps inherited this from his own Protestant tradition.

Another excellent example of evangelicalism in the eyes of the evangelical convert to Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy can be found in the story of Thomas Howard.²⁰⁸ Howard, originally a prominent North American evangelical

²⁰⁵ Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 100: “I could not prove that the Anglican communion was an integral part of the One Church...and I could not defend our separation from Rome and her faith.”

²⁰⁶ Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 160.

²⁰⁷ King, *Newman and the Alexandrian Fathers*, 45–46.

²⁰⁸ Howard conceptualized evangelicalism as “para-church” and “non-denominational” rather than being any specific ecclesiastical tradition. See Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*; Howard, *Lead, Kindly Light*. “The supreme hallmark of evangelicalism [is], namely, its extremely tender conscience.” See 14–15.

professor at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts, journeyed to the Episcopalian and then the Roman Catholic communion. His journey, unique in certain aspects, captures the general mindset of the plethora of evangelicals who continue to follow similar paths to Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

Howard was convinced that evangelicalism, while generally not wrong on any issues of doctrine, simply “is not enough.”²⁰⁹ Upon discovering more traditional Christianity during time spent in England, Howard confesses, “it opened my imagination backward into history.”²¹⁰ In addition to being generally a-historical, Howard concluded that evangelicalism had “Manichaeian” tendencies²¹¹ liturgically and that evangelicalism in North America was highly individualistic.²¹²

Howard represents the greater movement of Protestant evangelicals, mostly in North America, who have discovered that Christianity has a history and was liturgical in her expression in history.²¹³ In 1985 Howard converted to Roman Catholicism and resigned from Gordon College; many evangelical Christians in North America have followed in similar paths since Howard. These Christians’ minds are, like Howard’s, opened when they discover church history and liturgy. Upon discovering these two aspects they become convinced that evangelicalism, though good enough so far as it goes, is “not enough.” They conclude that

²⁰⁹ Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*, 2.

²¹⁰ Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*, 41. See 41–61 for a fuller account of Howard’s time in England.

²¹¹ Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*, 35.

²¹² Howard said: “It was as though the Bible had been written yesterday and I were the first man to open it.” See Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*, 67. Though, he admitted, evangelicalism never actually said this as such but somehow he left evangelicalism with this “feeling.”

²¹³ In Howard’s estimate: “Enough people are following a similar route to call it a ‘movement in the Church.’” Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*, 149.

evangelicalism simply is not a faithful expression of the fullness of the church as seen in history. As Fr. Antony Hughes, former Protestant evangelical turned Eastern Orthodox Priest says of those who convert, “a lot of people discover there is such incredible depth in Christianity. There’s two thousand years of this.”²¹⁴

The story of the late Peter Gillquist and the North American parachurch organization, Campus Crusade for Christ, is much akin to that of Thomas Howard. Peter Gillquist and the rest of the group documented in Gillquist’s ecclesiastical autobiography, *Becoming Orthodox*,²¹⁵ were, according to Gillquist, “gung ho” evangelicals.²¹⁶ Active in campus outreach and para-church ministry, Gillquist and his group evangelized and ministered on university campuses; however, they decided that their form of ministry was, ultimately, ineffective. Gillquist concluded that the root of the problem lay in the un-ecclesiastical nature of their ministry.²¹⁷ For, they were living out a Christianity of “Christ without church.”²¹⁸ Indeed it seemed to Gillquist that they were evangelizing but sending out countless Christians without any type of discipleship.

Owing to Gillquist and his fellow Campus Crusaders’ dissatisfaction with their ministry they decided to explore what the early church really looked like. They soon discovered that the early Christian church was indeed not parachurch but rather more organized; and thus they wished to turn the Campus Crusade

²¹⁴ Quoted in Carroll, *The New Faithful*, 60.

²¹⁵ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*.

²¹⁶ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 4–5.

²¹⁷ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 9–14. Gillquist states: “We get decisions, we get the commitments to Christ, we are building the organization and recruiting the staff, but we are not affecting a change. We are a failure in the midst of our own success.” See p. 9.

²¹⁸ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 13–14.

organization into a church; a desire quickly squelched by the leaders in the organization.²¹⁹ Therefore, they left the Campus Crusade and began a grand attempt at forming an ecclesiastical body on the basis of what they read in the New Testament and classical Christian texts.

After leaving Campus Crusade, Gillquist and his fellows split up and formed a number of house and small congregations throughout the United States. Soon, however, they concluded that they needed to work together and formed a conglomerate of parishes.²²⁰ The group decided to figure out what the early church really was all about and accordingly they each took a different element to study about classical Christianity, church history, classic doctrine, worship, and the Person of Christ ultimately gathering for a retreat in 1975 and comparing notes.²²¹ Their conclusion was that the classical church was liturgical, episcopal, and defined in doctrine by the ecumenical councils.²²² They decided to form an ecclesiastical community based on their findings. Initially they called themselves the “New Covenant Apostolic Order” but eventually became the “Evangelical Orthodox Church.”²²³

Thus far Gillquist and his fellows were committed evangelicals who were intentionally returning to classical Christian figures and practice. They were appropriating these themes and figures into their own tradition, albeit rather statically akin to the Anglo-Catholics. However, they had no objective guiding

²¹⁹ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 18–21.

²²⁰ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 22–26. Leaders over the age of 40 became elders.

²²¹ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 29–33.

²²² Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 34–48.

²²³ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 49–50.

principle other than discovery of the early church for the purpose of contemporary imitation and application. During this process, one or two of their leaders had converted to the Eastern Orthodox Church; one who still received their literature noticed they were sounding more and more Eastern Orthodox and accordingly put them in touch with Russian Orthodox Church leader and professor at St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York, Alexander Schmemmann. Upon meeting the Evangelical Orthodox, Schmemmann apparently commented, "they're Orthodox, but they don't know it yet."²²⁴ Eventually the Evangelical Orthodox stepped inside an Eastern Orthodox Church and, to their surprise; everything they had read about in the classical Christian church had materialized.²²⁵

The Evangelical Orthodox Church ultimately decided they wanted to formally enter into communion with the Eastern Orthodox Church. So, they headed for Istanbul to see the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.²²⁶ To their dismay they were turned back and told to work towards communion with the Orthodox in America.²²⁷ The Evangelical Orthodox Church then met with the Patriarchate of the Antiochene Orthodox Church and the Antiochene Metropolitan of North America, who was significantly more open to their desires.²²⁸ Soon after (in 1987) the majority of the parishes of the Evangelical Orthodox Church were

²²⁴ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 139.

²²⁵ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 137.

²²⁶ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 143–144.

²²⁷ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 149–152.

²²⁸ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 154–156.

incorporated into the Antiochene Orthodox Church.²²⁹ The conclusion of Gillquist and their community was that Orthodoxy was simply a fuller and truer evangelicalism.

The desire to appropriate classical Christianity into the contemporary church is commendable; however, to feel the need to convert to another denomination because “evangelical is not enough” is, at best, unnecessary and, at worst, conforming to an external notion of ecclesiology and commitment to external definitions of Christianity.²³⁰ The evangelicals who convert often conclude that appropriation of classical Christianity necessarily entails conforming to the practice of the early church, much of which may have had more to do with culture than solely theological commitment. Thus, they consider it impossible to retrieve the life and work of the Fathers within their own Protestant traditions. This is ultimately a convoluting of the distinction between faith and order and it contains elements of legalism.²³¹ These figures felt the need to conform to the external

²²⁹ Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, 161–172; Metropolitan Philip, “Metropolitan Philip’s Address to the 48th Archdiocesan Council,” *The Word* 51, no. 7 (September 2007): 4–10. A number of parishes, mostly in the Midwest, remained as the Evangelical Orthodox. They exist to this day committed to evangelicalism. According to one former member in personal interaction, their worship is the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom chanted in a monotone and, according to Peter Gillquist in personal interaction, “half Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom and half ‘make-it-up.’” See the Evangelical Orthodox Church website for further information: <http://www.evangelicalorthodox.org/>.

²³⁰ Sauve’s critique of George’s Florovsky’s retrieval of the Greek Fathers is applicable here as well. Though Sauve generally approves of Florovsky’s appropriation of the Fathers he says of the Russian theologian’s “neopatristic synthesis” that “if one holds to the neopatristic synthesis as an absolute methodology for doing theology...one treats the Fathers in the same way that Protestants treat the Scriptures; *sola scriptura* is replaced with *sola patristica*. The Fathers are used as proof-texts...” The figures and groups discussed in this section who feel the need to convert once “discovering” church history also, quite legalistically, use the Fathers in a manner similar to proof-texting. See Sauve, “Georges V. Florovsky and Vladimir N. Lossky an exploration, comparison and demonstration of their unique approaches to the neopatristic synthesis,” 83.

²³¹ This is not to say that converting to another denomination such as Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy is inherently wrong; it can indeed be done rightly. For example, George Dragas

aspects of patristic theology and life far too literally.²³² Their static approach is similar to what Torrance sees in the Western church, namely, the “Tertullian type of approach” towards both Scripture and confession²³³ where, as he sees it, they reduce “the church’s Confession of the Faith to systems of doctrinal presuppositions which are invested with prescriptive authority.”²³⁴ Ultimately, Torrance views this as dualist and argues for a separation of the substance of the faith from its formulation.²³⁵ Torrance’s helpful separation of faith and order as well as the object of faith from its formulation will be discussed later in this thesis. As the subsequent chapters on Torrance shall explore, Torrance saw a distinction between the substance of the faith (which he saw as core) and forms of piety (which he saw as peripheral).

Whereas some evangelicals, upon returning to the Fathers, saw the need to convert, others appropriate classical Christianity in, at best, a more subjective manner and, at worst, perhaps even tendentiously. One example of this approach is

converted to the Greek Orthodox Church because he felt he could better serve the church in this way. See Torrance’s account of Dragas’ conversion in his letter of recommendation for George Dragas to the Chair of Church History at the University of Aberdeen: The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 178.

²³² As Sauve helpfully puts it about Georges Florovsky: “Florovsky’s admonition to ‘follow the Fathers’ does not mean just to quote their words (especially out of context) but to ‘acquire their mind’...This recovery of the ‘mind’ of the Fathers—a recovery not only of their theology but of their existential attitude, their spiritual orientation, their piety and holiness—is behind his concept of *neopatristic synthesis*.” See Sauve, “Georges V. Florovsky and Vladimir N. Lossky an exploration, comparison and demonstration of their unique approaches to the neopatristic synthesis,” 69. The group discussed above often tended towards the view that adopting the “mind” of the Fathers entailed literal imitation of their way of life. As will be argued, the “evangelicals” below, especially Torrance, were most in line with Florovsky’s conception of adoption of the “mind of the Fathers.”

²³³ See Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), 107.

²³⁴ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 107.

²³⁵ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 107.

the Emergent/Emerging church.²³⁶ These figures are, in many ways, at the forefront of the contemporary “return to” the classical Greek Fathers and, along with Torrance and the evangelical movement which will be discussed below, very commendably set the stage for others to return to the classical Fathers. However, they lacked any objective guiding principle.²³⁷ Accordingly, their appropriation of the Fathers often tends towards subjectivity and tendentiousness.

The first aspect to Emerging Christianity’s appropriation of classical Christianity entails their overall approach to theology. As many theologians from both within and without the movement point out, Emerging Christianity adheres to a “post” theology, meaning, they define themselves in relation to being after (“post”) a number of elements. Herein, Emerging Christianity is “post” a plethora of rudiments of traditional Christianity and traditional Christian theology. For example, as Scot McKnight, a theologian highly sympathetic to the emerging movement and on board with many of their tenets, points out, they are “post systematic theology.” In his words:

²³⁶ This is a largely North American Christian movement which, strongly dissatisfied with their usually seeker-sensitive and conservative evangelical Protestantism, is embracing a broader Christianity; a door opened by postmodernism. One could distinguish between “emerging” and “emergent,” the former being the generic, umbrella term and the latter a specific group of the former. See Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why*, Reprint. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 163; See also McKnight, “Five Streams of the Emerging Church,” 1. The terms “Emerging Christianity,” “Emergent,” and “Emerging” will be used synonymously.

²³⁷ It should be noted that it is difficult to identify specifically emerging beliefs because their identity is defined more in terms of a generous approach and mindset than actual set beliefs or ecclesiastical structures. Scot McKnight helpfully articulates that their approach to theology is: “This is what I believe, but I could be wrong. What do you think? Let’s talk.” See McKnight, “Five Streams of the Emerging Church,” 5. Indeed, it is “a conversation” more than anything. Byassee notes this also. See Jason Byassee, “Emerging From What, Going Where?: Emerging Churches and Ancient Christianity,” in *Ancient Faith for the Church’s Future*, Mark Husbands and Jeffrey P. Greenman, eds., (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 251.

The emerging movement tends to be suspicious of systematic theology. Why? Not because we don't read systematics, but because the diversity of theologies alarms us, no genuine consensus has been achieved, God didn't reveal a systematic theology but a storied narrative, and no language is capable of capturing the Absolute Truth who alone is God. Frankly, the emerging movement loves ideas and theology. It just doesn't have an airtight system or statement of faith. We believe the Great Tradition offers various ways for telling the truth about God's redemption in Christ, but we don't believe any one theology gets it absolutely right. Hence, a trademark feature of the emerging movement is that we believe all theology will remain a conversation about the Truth who is God in Christ through the Spirit, and about God's story of redemption at work in the church. No systematic theology can be final. In this sense, the emerging movement is radically Reformed.²³⁸

Additionally, Emergents are “post” modern.²³⁹ Different members are more “postmodern” than others; they all, however, see themselves as responsive to and following from the Christianity of the modern age.²⁴⁰

Along similar lines, Emerging Christianity is, in many regards, a protest movement. So, along with being “post” systematic theology and “post” modern (and, indeed, sometimes “postmodern”), the movement is a response to the Christianity within which the leaders of the movement were reared. Indeed, as D.A. Carson in his critique of Emerging Christianity puts it, “the reforms that the movement encourages mirror the protests of the lives of many of its leaders.”²⁴¹ Owing to Emerging Christianity’s “post” mindset, they are, as a whole, suspicious of

²³⁸ McKnight, “Five Streams of the Emerging Church,” 5.

²³⁹ D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 29.

²⁴⁰ Dan Kimball is illustrative. He considers Emerging Christianity to be “post” seeker sensitive and mega-church. See Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 27; See also Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 38.

²⁴¹ Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 14.

tradition, especially modernism, and especially the last twenty or so years.²⁴²

Accordingly, they are often strongly allergic of anything hinting of “imperial Christianity” and often attempt a process akin to “de-Hellenization” in places they see necessary.²⁴³

Notably (perhaps even ironically), Emerging Christianity’s suspicious attitude towards the past in general and modernism in particular has opened a door into the world of the classical Christianity of pre-modernity. The founders of Emerging Christianity arose out of the same seeker-sensitive mega-church evangelicalism that figures discussed above such as Peter Gillquist and Thomas Howard converted from; and, for both groups, this opened the door to the classical Christianity of the Eastern, Greek Fathers. However, Emerging Christianity’s appropriation led not to conversion to a more historically rooted Christian denomination, as it did for Howard and Gillquist, but something rather different.

Overall, leading figures in Emerging Christianity are interested, at least in theory, in anything Christian before the modern era. However, other than this there is no other guiding principle for reading or appropriation. Indeed, their approach is, at best, highly eclectic. On the basis of Karl Barth one recent Emerging

²⁴² As one Emerging author puts it: “In Emergent circles I sometimes find a nagging suspicion about the past—specifically, the near past—born of our heightened sensitivity to the compromises of the church within modernity. We’re working to be something new—new theology and new ecclesial forms that are free or at least loosened from uncritical compromises with the modern ideologies make us anxious. Sometimes the past is problematic (at least the past that’s closest to us, where we see such troubling compromises); other times, the past is our companion (many of us find great encouragement from the ancient, premodern church).” See Chris Eerdman, “Digging Up the Past: Karl Barth (the Reformed Giant) as Friend to the Emerging Church,” in Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 236–237.

²⁴³ See the account of Phyllis Tickle: Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 161–162; Brian D McLaren, *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?: Christian Identity in a Multi-Faith World* (New York: Jericho Books, 2012), 81–86.

author contends that Emergents ought to follow Barth's use of tradition; appropriation that he considers "extemporaneous, free, meandering, playful."²⁴⁴ For this author, Barth's approach was indeed a freedom from and freedom for tradition and was a "starting over" and a "reconstruction"²⁴⁵ of tradition. The main guiding principle, at least for this author, is freedom.²⁴⁶

Freedom as a general guiding principle shows up regularly in other Emerging authors both implicitly and explicitly. For example, one of the better-known Emerging authors, Tony Jones, wrote a book on the spiritual disciplines²⁴⁷ following in the vein of authors such as Richard Foster.²⁴⁸ Here, Jones' guiding principle for the appropriation of classical Christianity was simply spiritual disciplines and exercises and his discussion ranges from the Byzantine "Jesus Prayer" to contemporary Roman Catholic spirituality. Jones, in an attempt to stray from modern and seeker-sensitive forms of spirituality, wants to go deeper. Though a very helpful book on the spiritual disciplines across all the traditions and covering a great span of history, Jones' appropriation seems to be based on nothing more than his own selective reading of classical Christianity.

Another notable figure from Emergent Christianity is one of the more famous leaders of the "neo-monastic" movement, Shane Claiborne who lives as a

²⁴⁴ Eerdman, "Digging Up the Past" in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, eds. Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, 242.

²⁴⁵ Eerdman, "Digging Up the Past" in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, eds. Pagitt and Jones, 239–240.

²⁴⁶ Eerdman, "Digging Up the Past" in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, eds. Pagitt and Jones, 240–243.

²⁴⁷ Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2005).

²⁴⁸ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, Reprint (New York: HarperCollins, 1998).

“neo-monastic” in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.²⁴⁹ The “neo-monastics” of Emerging Christianity are communities of married and single Christians living intentionally in a community devoted to charity. They have chosen this one, arguably important, element of classical Christianity and appropriated it for themselves. However, in practice, their way of life resembles very little of the ancient monastic tradition other than a shared name.²⁵⁰ This, once again, portrays the highly eclectic method of appropriation.²⁵¹

The selectivity and eclecticism of Emerging Christianity’s appropriation of classical Christianity is perhaps clearest in the writings of Brian McLaren, particularly in his book “Generous Orthodoxy.”²⁵² In this highly acclaimed text, McLaren identifies orthodoxy with humility, charity, courage, and diligence.²⁵³ In short, for McLaren orthodoxy and orthopraxy cannot be separated and, indeed, mutually inform one another.²⁵⁴ McLaren’s generous orthodoxy looks to all

²⁴⁹ See Shane Claiborne, *IRRESISTIBLE REVOLUTION: Living as an Ordinary Radical*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

²⁵⁰ Upon hearing about the “neo-monastics,” a Greek Orthodox monk once said in personal conversation, a bit cheekily, “tell him to come see us ‘old monastics.’” The implication was that the “neo-monastics” have nothing to do with (and want nothing to do with) the “old monastics.”

²⁵¹ Byasee is less critical. He believes that the neo-monastic movement is bringing a much-needed element back into evangelicalism. See Byasee, “Emerging From What, Going Where?: Emerging Churches and Ancient Christianity,” in *Ancient Faith for the Church’s Future*, eds. Husbands and Greenman, 258. While it could be argued that monasticism is indeed a much-needed element, neo-monasticism is nothing like monasticism.

²⁵² Brian D McLaren, *A Generous Or+hodoxy: Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-Yet-Hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

²⁵³ McLaren, *A Generous Or+hodoxy*, 30.

²⁵⁴ McLaren, *A Generous Or+hodoxy*, 30ff. At first glance this close connection of orthodoxy and orthopraxy looks akin to Torrance’s appropriation of the patristic notion of εὐσέβεια and θεοσεβία discussed in chapters two and three of this thesis. However, the identification between the two is much closer in McLaren than it is in Torrance and Athanasius for whom piety/godliness flow from true theology. For McLaren, the two are essentially amalgamated.

traditions and historical time periods (other than the most recent) and even “seeks to see members of other religions and non-religions...as dialogue partners and even collaborators.”²⁵⁵

When McLaren identifies precise elements of his generous orthodoxy he lists the “seven Jesus’ whom he has known,” the conservative protestant Jesus, the Pentecostal-charismatic Jesus, the Roman Catholic Jesus, the Eastern Orthodox Jesus, the liberal protestant Jesus, the Anabaptist Jesus, and the Jesus of the oppressed.²⁵⁶ He explains that, therefore, he is missional, evangelical, post-protestant, liberal/conservative, mystic/poetic, biblical, charismatic/contemplative, fundamental/Calvinist, (ana)Baptist/Anglican, Methodist, catholic, Green, incarnational, Depressed-yet-hopeful, emergent, and unfinished.²⁵⁷ On a practical level, typical of the Emergent movement in this regard is St Gregory of Nyssa church in California and their combination of Eastern Orthodox, Coptic, and Anglican practices and theology.²⁵⁸

Ultimately, McLaren concludes that orthodoxy must be viewed as an ongoing process.²⁵⁹ Throughout his book McLaren refers to elements and figures from classical Christianity,²⁶⁰ advocating a return to any and all aspects of pre-modern and contemporary church tradition. McLaren proposes, finally, that

²⁵⁵ McLaren, *A Generous Or+hodoxy*, 35.

²⁵⁶ McLaren, *A Generous Or+hodoxy*, 43–67.

²⁵⁷ McLaren, *A Generous Or+hodoxy*, 105–297.

²⁵⁸ Phyllis Tickle labels them “Angli-emergent.” Phyllis Tickle, *Emergence Christianity: What it is, Where it is going, and Why it matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 86. Hyphenations of this sort are common for Emergents.

²⁵⁹ McLaren, *A Generous Or+hodoxy*, 293ff.

²⁶⁰ e.g. Athanasius. See McLaren, *A Generous Or+hodoxy*, 57–58.

Emergents, rather than working within their own tradition, ought to embrace the whole, “capital T” Tradition. In the words of one commentator on the movement, their view is: “Don’t fret so much about denominational distinctives. Embrace the entire Christian tradition as your own.”²⁶¹

As discussed earlier, Emerging Christians are self-admittedly having more of a “conversation” than doing scientific theology. Accordingly, their appropriation of classical Christianity is, even at the “formal” theological level, extremely unorganized and eclectic. At the “grassroots” level of orthopraxy, their appropriation is no less eclectic. Overall, Emerging Christians want to move far away from seeker-sensitive and mega-church models towards, seemingly, any other model. Thus, for them classical pre-modern Christianity holds certain attraction.

Dan Kimball, in his book on emerging worship, advocates bringing candles and darkness into worship services.²⁶² Additionally, Kimball urges for Christ-centered and simple worship, referring to Justin Martyr’s account on early Christian worship in his First Apology.²⁶³ Notably, for Kimball, this means a return to the centrality of communion²⁶⁴ and theocentric preaching.²⁶⁵ Thus, Kimball, while foregoing more recent Christian practices of his own broadly evangelical

²⁶¹ Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 128.

²⁶² Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 35.

²⁶³ Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 113.

²⁶⁴ Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 162.

²⁶⁵ Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 251–254.

tradition from whence he came, is returning to practices of other traditions and pre-modern Christian traditions.²⁶⁶

The Emerging movement's return to and appropriation of classical Christianity is commendable and they are in many ways at the forefront of a *ressourcement* movement in evangelical circles. Whereas their intentions are indeed commendable, their lack of any objective guiding principle for appropriation of classical Christianity causes their reading to be highly subjective, eclectic, and often tendentious. As Carson helpfully notes, Emergent theology tries to work somewhere on the spectrum between the polarized extremes of absolutism and relativism.²⁶⁷ In regards to a return and appropriation of classical Christianity this has become a basically eclectic appeal to tradition.²⁶⁸ This Emergent return to Tradition and classical Christianity, as opposed to allowing the Emergent church to be informed and reformed by classical Christianity, causes them to simply be unfaithful to and misunderstand classical Christianity.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ D.A. Carson notes this trend towards such classic practices as candles, crosses, and retreats. Emergents want to be linked to historic Christianity and not only modern evangelicalism/fundamentalism. See Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 55.

²⁶⁷ Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 31.

²⁶⁸ Carson argues that the Emergent "appeal to tradition" tends to work itself out in one of three ways: (1) Picking and choosing elements from classical Christianity, (2) because every Christian is a part of some tradition related to other traditions, Christians must learn to see the "bigger picture," or, at the most defined and rigorous level, (3) following Jonathan Wilson's interpretation of Alasdair MacIntyre's view of tradition, Christians should embrace one overarching tradition in order to combat fragmented individualism of traditions which modernism taught. See Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 139–140. See also Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) and Jonathan R. Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World: Lessons for the Church from MacIntyre's "After Virtue,"* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998).

²⁶⁹ Carson provides two further helpful critiques: (1) The irony of the Emergent appeal to Tradition but dissimilarity to any tradition in their own practice. He states: "As long as you can pick and choose from something as vast as the great Tradition, you are really not bound by the discipline of

Ultimately, then, the Emergent Church, while valiantly and commendably leading the way to a return to the classical Fathers, often misunderstands them completely.²⁷⁰ This is perhaps owing to the fact that, rather than allowing the ideas of the classical Fathers to guide them, the Emergent church is basically guided by their own eclecticism and idiosyncrasy, indeed; they have become absolute in their “emergentedness”²⁷¹ and they have an overly strong confidence in modern progress.²⁷²

Unfortunately, the Emergent return to Tradition often amounts to an unfair treatment of specific traditions.²⁷³ Typical is Phyllis Tickle’s statement: “Christianity, in its early days, had no theory of the atonement or of its mechanics;

any tradition. While thinking yourself most virtuous, your choices become most idiosyncratic.” (2) There were and continue to be core contradictions between the different traditions. See Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 140–142.

²⁷⁰ “[McLaren] has constructed his own Jesus from disembodied slips of presentation he happens to have stumbled across within these various traditions.” Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 162.

²⁷¹ Alan Torrance’s helpful account and study of the collapse of the threefold typology (exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism) of Alan Race and Gavin D’Costa perhaps sheds light on the Emergent approach to tradition. According to Torrance, “the logical impossibility of a pluralist view of religions means that the typology of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism is untenable” because logically “pluralism must always logically be a form of exclusivism and nothing called pluralism really exists” collapsing the threefold typology at the base on the basis of the fact that “all pluralists are committed to holding some form of truth criteria...” See Alan Torrance, “Towards Inclusive Ministry: The Logical Impossibility of Religious and Theological Inclusivism, Pluralism and Relativism” in *The Call to Serve: Essays on Ministry in Honour of Bishop Penny Jamieson*, ed. Douglas A. Campbell, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 257–258. See also Gavin D’Costa, “The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions,” *Religious Studies* 32, no. 02 (1996): 223–232. The “truth criteria” of the Emergent church seems to be “being Emergent.”

²⁷² See further Jason Byasee, “Emerging From What, Going Where?: Emerging Churches and Ancient Christianity,” in *Ancient Faith for the Church’s Future*, Husbands and Greenman, eds., 255.

²⁷³ Jason Byasee gave an example of Doug Pagitt’s complete misreading of the debate between Augustine and Pelagius. See Byasee, “Emerging From What, Going Where?: Emerging Churches and Ancient Christianity,” in *Ancient Faith for the Church’s Future*, eds. Husbands and Greenman, 254.

or, if it did, there is no written record left to bear witness to that fact.”²⁷⁴ Also

typical is Brian McLaren’s statement:

Constantine gave Roman-Imperial Christians a compelling reason to reject Mohammed (since Mohammed didn’t submit to the theopolitical entity Constantine had created) and Constantine also gave Mohammed a compelling reason to reject so-called orthodox Roman Christianity (since Christianity required submission to the Roman theopolitical system).²⁷⁵

Thus, according to McLaren, Mohammad could not possibly have identified as a Christian and was forced to form his own religion.²⁷⁶ The Emergent reading in both these illustrative instances portrays their turn to classical Christian history but a reading through the lens of their own critiques of more organized and imperial Christianity.²⁷⁷ However, Athanasius, for example, had a very robust view of the atonement²⁷⁸ and one could point to John of Damascus’ discussion of Islam to see the important theological differences between two religions in the mind of one of the Fathers.²⁷⁹

While Emergents often misread the classical Christian tradition owing to their eclecticism and subjectivism, their genius is in the application of the Fathers.²⁸⁰ Emergents want to retrieve helpful elements (albeit as they see it) and

²⁷⁴ Tickle, *Emergence Christianity*, 197.

²⁷⁵ McLaren, *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?*, 91.

²⁷⁶ McLaren, *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?*, 90.

²⁷⁷ McLaren’s reading in this particularly instance is guided by his agenda for a more generous and charitable approach to other religions. In his chapter on the doctrine of the Trinity he refers to Gregory Nazianzen, the other Cappadocian Fathers, and John of Damascus, in his proposal for social Trinitarianism as a way to view God and social interactions in order for better Christian interactions with others. See McLaren, *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?*, 125–132.

²⁷⁸ e.g. *De Incarnatione* 7–9.

²⁷⁹ e.g. *De Haeresibus* 101.

²⁸⁰ See Byasee, “Emerging From What, Going Where?: Emerging Churches and Ancient Christianity,” in *Ancient Faith for the Church’s Future*, eds. Husbands and Greenman, 257–263.

directly apply them to church life today. Herein, they are at the forefront of a return to the Fathers and their example will, no doubt, continue to lead many towards further retrieval of classical Christianity. Ultimately, however, they are unfair to the Fathers themselves on account of their tendentiousness.

The third approach to the Fathers among evangelicals is more objective than the previous group, however, they tend to approach them through Western, Protestant, and Augustinian spectacles; they tend to emphasize, rather tendentiously Augustinian themes and, sometimes, a numerical reading of the *consensus*. Some have provided very practical guidelines for appropriation. Their chroniclers have called them by many different titles including “young fogeys”²⁸¹ and “younger evangelicals.”²⁸² These figures, however, tend towards a slightly tendentious reading wherein they read Western, Protestant, and Augustinian themes back into the Greek Fathers, who were working with a different, but not necessary contradictory, paradigm.

Robert Webber’s influence on evangelical appropriations of classical Christianity was significant during his time and continues to this day.²⁸³ In many ways, Webber is looked to as the father of this movement. Webber’s appropriation of classical theology is perhaps best elaborated upon in his book *Ancient-Future*

²⁸¹ Oden, *Requiem: A Lament in Three Movements* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 137–139; Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 10–11.

²⁸² Robert E. Webber, *Younger Evangelicals, The: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002).

²⁸³ For example, Joel Scandrett was recently appointed as the Director for the recently formed Robert E. Webber Center at Trinity School for Ministry, an evangelical seminary in the U.S.A. See Joel Scandrett, “The Robert E. Webber Center,” *Seed and Harvest: Trinity School for Ministry* XXXV, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 6–8 for a projection of his hopes.

Faith. Here he attempts to return to classical Christianity while also applying it to contemporary Christianity. The “Webberian” retrieval of classical Christianity began in May 1997 with the “Chicago Call,” a call for evangelicals to return to historic Christianity.²⁸⁴ The *Chicago Call* urged evangelicals to return to historic roots and creedal identity.

The core of Webber’s appropriation of classical Christianity is a Christocentrism of his reading and appropriation. Webber proposes a “Christocentric method” of appropriation.²⁸⁵ Webber urges Christians to interpret the Bible, appropriate the Fathers, and do theology with a focus upon the *regula fidei* (Rule of Faith) and also the *kerygma*.²⁸⁶ Indeed, he states that the “tapestry of faith begins with the person and work of Christ.”²⁸⁷ Webber applies this approach directly to Christology, as well as ecclesiology,²⁸⁸ worship,²⁸⁹ spirituality,²⁹⁰ and mission, typically Western and Protestant themes.²⁹¹ The outcome of his project is a more holistic conception of the atonement than typically found in Protestantism, a more mystic spirituality focused upon union with Christ, and emulation of early Christian

²⁸⁴ See Robert Webber and Donald G. Bloesch, *The Orthodox Evangelicals: Who They Are and What They Are Saying* 11–18 for the text of the *Chicago Call* and subsequent pages for comments on the *Call*.

²⁸⁵ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 31.

²⁸⁶ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 185. Webber proposed a theological reading of Scripture. See p. 190. Cf. Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology: The Realism of Christian Revelation*, Reprint (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1999).

²⁸⁷ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 189.

²⁸⁸ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 73–91.

²⁸⁹ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 97–115; Robert Webber, *Planning Blended Worship: The Creative Mixture of Old and New* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 17; Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God’s Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008). See e.g. pp. 89–117; 167–178.

²⁹⁰ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 121–138.

²⁹¹ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 141–173.

mission practice. Thus, his evangelical tradition is somewhat reformed on the basis of what he finds. Though notably absent from Webber's writings is the centrality of the notion of the vicarious humanity of Christ. Problematically, Webber's notion of the *regula fidei* is fairly rigid, somewhat akin to the static approach of those who convert after discovering the Fathers. Webber's project is, on the whole, highly practical in orientation. Throughout his many publications he sought to explore *how* the theology and faith of classical Christianity might be applied in contemporary settings; indeed very precisely in most cases.

This is an element taken up more fully by Thomas Oden. Whereas Webber's work was more epistemological and methodological in nature Oden's work is perhaps the most comprehensive appropriation of the Fathers and his reading is more extremely holistic and synthetic. Most importantly, Oden offers a very helpful and practical guide for appropriation. Oden labels the movement in which he stands "paleo-orthodoxy," a term which he uses to set this movement apart from other movements with the term "orthodox" embedded in them such as "neo-orthodoxy."²⁹² For Oden, what sets the paleo-orthodox apart is their return to ancient Christian orthodoxy, which he views as the "vital center" and the "central thread" running throughout Christianity.²⁹³

²⁹² See e.g. Oden, *Requiem*, 130–131; Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 33–34. Oden lists a number of Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox writers he saw as part of the movement. See Oden, *Requiem*, 165–166. He says: "This list is much healthier than the few souls I could name in *Agenda for Theology* in 1979...then it was a cloud the size of a man's hand; now it is misting; in a decade it will shower; someday there may be a hurricane."

²⁹³ Thomas C. Oden, *Agenda for Theology* (New York: HarperCollins, 1979), 115–116.

In an attempt to return to the “vital center” Oden proposes a return to the “Vincentian Canon” and, like Webber, the Rule of Faith. Oden calls for a return to “orthodoxy” by which he means “integrated biblical teaching as interpreted in its most consensual period...classic Christian teaching.”²⁹⁴ This is, for Oden, a return to the “fountain” as he calls it.²⁹⁵ Oden proposes that in order to focus upon orthodoxy, Christians return to a focus upon the Rule of Faith by means of the “Vincentian canon.”²⁹⁶ Herein Oden contends that paleo-orthodox theologians should return to that truly consensual period of Christian orthodoxy and “guard the Deposit of Faith.”²⁹⁷ For Oden, Vincent of Lérins’ method of “consensual recollection” should be applied very literally.²⁹⁸ For Oden, following Vincent, then the best attempt (guided by the Holy Spirit), is to believe only that which has been believed “everywhere, always, and by all.”²⁹⁹ Thus, for Oden, the key is to always seek universality, antiquity, and conciliar consent.³⁰⁰ Herein, there are “key ecumenical teachers” which are to be followed.³⁰¹ Oden applies his method very

²⁹⁴ Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 29.

²⁹⁵ Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 33.

²⁹⁶ Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 37.

²⁹⁷ Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 122–123.

²⁹⁸ Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 157.

²⁹⁹ Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 159–186.

³⁰⁰ Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 162–170.

³⁰¹ Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 171. Oden, following the early councils, lists Cyprian, the Cappadocians, Athanasius and Cyril, Ambrose, Augustine, John Chrysostom, Theophilus, Hilary, Jerome, Prosper, and Leo. Very helpfully Oden notes that the Fathers could be quoted as holding wild views but that they should be viewed, according to Vincent, sympathetically and in light of one another; just like reading the Bible. See pp. 172–173. Holmes argues that this was the Reformation method and that Calvin, when disagreeing with, for example, Augustine, would simply say “someone has said,” not because he did not know who it was but because he was disagreeing with him charitably. See Holmes, *Listening to the Past*, 16.

widely in the fields of dogmatic theology³⁰² and pastoral theology³⁰³ as well as in very extensive and ecumenical compendiums of patristic writings in the *Ancient Christian Commentaries on Scripture* and *Ancient Christian Doctrine* series.

D.H. Williams, following in the vein of Oden, proposes a retrieval of classical Christianity and application of it into “current theological reflections of evangelicalism.”³⁰⁴ Calling the evangelical mindset towards tradition “amnesia” he calls, in response, for a remembering of tradition.³⁰⁵ Accordingly, much of Williams’ work has been a re-presentation of the tradition for Protestants, which he calls “the foundational legacy of apostolic and patristic faith, most accurately enshrined in Scripture and secondarily in the great confessions and creeds of the early church.”³⁰⁶ Ultimately, Williams believes that the patristic tradition was “canonical” and should be normative; the core to which was God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ, indeed, the Rule of Faith.³⁰⁷ Again, his notion of the Rule of Faith is fairly general and he looks to the whole of tradition.

Other figures have followed in this same stream of a more holistic approach to the Fathers. For example, James Cutsinger in his book *Reclaiming the Great Tradition*,³⁰⁸ Rodney Clapp in his book *Border Crossings*,³⁰⁹ Christopher Hall’s work

³⁰² Thomas Oden, *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009).

³⁰³ Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: HarperCollins 1983).

³⁰⁴ Daniel H. Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 4–5.

³⁰⁵ Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism*, 9; 16.

³⁰⁶ Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition*, 24; 47–84.

³⁰⁷ See further Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition*, 47–84.

³⁰⁸ James S. Cutsinger, *Reclaiming the Great Tradition: Evangelicals, Catholics & Orthodox in Dialogue* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

³⁰⁹ Rodney Clapp, *Border Crossings: Christian Trespasses on Popular Culture and Public Affairs* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2000).

with Thomas Oden in the *Ancient Christian Commentary* series already discussed above as well as his theological reworking of the Fathers in his other more distinctively theological texts,³¹⁰ Stephen Holmes' work in retrieving the tradition,³¹¹ and also William J. Abraham's *Logic of Renewal*.³¹²

These groups, while calling for a return to the East, typically remain Augustinian and Protestant in their emphases. Throughout Webber's book he attempts to allow the Great Tradition to inform basically Protestant themes such as justification, church, mission, worship. Williams attempts to prove that the early Greek Fathers asserted a basically Protestant version of justification by faith.³¹³ These theologians' intentions are good, namely, freeing the Fathers from accusations of doing theology through the spectacles of Greek philosophy and seeing Protestantism as in line with patristic Christianity. However, they tend towards reading Western, Protestant, Augustinian theology back into Fathers who were not Western, Protestant or Augustinian. As this this thesis shall explore, Torrance, while remaining faithfully Reformed and evangelical returned to the Fathers on their own terms.

³¹⁰ Christopher A. Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002); Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1998); Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall, eds., *The Trinity*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

³¹¹ Holmes, *Listening to the Past*; Stephen R. Holmes, *The Holy Trinity: Understanding God's Life* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012).

³¹² William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Renewal* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

³¹³ Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition*, 130–139. Though Oden's is the most blatant attempt. See Oden, ed. *Justification Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

1.8 Conclusion

There have been diverse views of the *Consensus Patrum*, not only among Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox but also (and perhaps even more so) among the early Protestants themselves. This chapter argued that the Eastern Orthodox traditionally view the *Consensus Patrum* through the lens of Gregory Palamas, particularly as he is interpreted in the neopalamite school. This chapter also argued that the common factor among Western theologians turning to the *consensus* is that Augustine is core and Augustinian themes are central (for the Catholics, Augustine read through Aquinas). However, by the time of the mid-20th century, the majority of evangelical Protestants avoided the Fathers. Indeed, it seemed that the Fathers and the *Consensus Patrum* were the inheritance of Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and (in a very critical way) the liberal tradition. Thus, immediately prior to Torrance's time, his own evangelical and Reformed tradition was dominated by two opposite viewpoints, namely, a liberal denial of the importance of the Fathers or the Biblicist avoidance of the Fathers. Torrance found himself within and, in many ways at the cutting edge of, evangelical theologies of retrieval. These evangelical movements of retrieval tended to have one of three outcomes: Conversion, subjective appropriation, or holistic appropriation, often via a Western and Augustinian lens.

Torrance, a theologian who saw himself squarely in the Scottish Reformed and evangelical tradition of indebtedness to the Greek Fathers³¹⁴ in addition to, more generally, the Reformed and Calvinist tradition of faithfulness to the *Consensus Patrum*,³¹⁵ is a unique figure during his own immediate setting owing to, on the one hand, the widespread ignorance of the Fathers and, on the other hand approaches of varying levels of tendentiousness or conversion. Torrance remembers himself always being informed to a certain extent by the Fathers, even before he entered his studies in divinity.³¹⁶ Patristic themes and figures are indeed present in many of Torrance's early works.³¹⁷ However, the *Consensus Patrum* as an entity only begins to emerge as a central theme in Torrance's later texts. Notably, it flowers during the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue in the late 1980s³¹⁸ and was likely influenced by his interaction with the Eastern Orthodox for whom the notion of a *Consensus Patrum* is absolutely central, as this chapter has argued. Torrance's *Trinitarian Faith*, published in 1988, is the clearest statement of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* out of all of Torrance's many published and unpublished writings.

³¹⁴ See Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (T & T Clark, 1996), 66–74; 79–90 for a discussion of Robert Boyd and John Forbes of Corse.

³¹⁵ See Thomas F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 21–76 for a discussion of the connections Torrance saw between Calvin and the Greek Fathers.

³¹⁶ *Itinerarium Mentis In Deum: T.F. Torrance—My Theological Development*. The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Series II, Box 10.

³¹⁷ e.g. Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) where he argues for the importance of the Nicene conception of space and time over and against various forms of epistemological and cosmological dualism.

³¹⁸ See Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I* and Thomas F. Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1993).

Torrance is of great relevance as an example of a Reformed evangelical retrieval of the Greek Fathers. Furthermore, Torrance saw his role as necessarily involving criticism of the Western, Augustinian tradition (particularly the epistemological, cosmological, and theological dualism embedded in it) by means of the Greek Fathers. Thus, as this thesis will argue in the following chapters, Torrance's approach is unique amongst other Protestants who traditionally emphasized Augustine (either explicitly or implicitly) by reading the Greek Fathers through Augustinian and Western theological themes. Torrance returns to and adopts Greek patristic themes such as *theosis* and the vicarious humanity of Christ while remaining faithfully Reformed and evangelical.

The subsequent chapters of this thesis will explore the way in which Torrance allows his own tradition to be reconstructed on the basis of what he discovers in the Fathers and also reconstructs the Fathers in light of his own Reformed evangelical tradition, allowing the two sides to mutually inform one another in a very dynamic way. While truly returning to the Greek Fathers on their own terms Torrance was, at his core, an evangelical and Reformed theologian and churchman, and he approached the Fathers from this perspective.

Torrance was an evangelical. He was born into a missionary family in China, sent to China by the China Inland Mission.³¹⁹ Throughout his life Torrance viewed himself more as a missionary and evangelist than an academic. Though he entered

³¹⁹ *Itinerarium Mentis In Deum: T.F. Torrance—My Theological Development*. The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Series II, Box 10.

an academic vocation, he considered himself an evangelist throughout his entire life, an evangelist to the Western worldview and culture.³²⁰ Prior to the flowering of his academic career, Torrance was ordained as a Minister in the Church of Scotland and has approached theology not as a purely academic discipline but as something that requires a pious and repentant approach.³²¹ Theologically, as shall be seen in the following chapters, Torrance considered the historical Jesus Christ to be absolutely central. Though he strayed away from typical evangelical emphases such as the atonement and emphasized rather the incarnation he clearly remained committed to these central doctrines; he simply emphasized others.

Torrance was a Reformed theologian. His early studies in theology were under the Reformed theologian H.R. Mackintosh, a major conduit of Barthian theology into Scotland and the English-speaking world. Torrance considers Mackintosh to have had no small influence upon his own theological development and remembers his time with him at New College fondly.³²² Torrance's earliest

³²⁰ Jock Stein notes, referencing Robert T. Walker's recent PhD thesis, that Torrance never saw himself as an academic. Rather, he primarily saw himself as a missionary evangelizing the foundations of modern scientific culture, which involved four aspects: (1) Fashioning a modern Christian dogmatics, (2) reconstructing the concept of reason as controlled by its object, (3) overcoming dualism, and (4) reshaping fundamental presuppositions. See Jock Stein, Introduction to Thomas F. Torrance, *Gospel, Church, and Ministry*, ed. Jock Stein (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 2. These elements of Torrance's "mission statement" surely drove his work in constructing the *Torrancian Consensus Patrum*.

³²¹ See Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), 437–447. At the bi-annual T.F. Torrance Conference in Scotland run by Torrance's former student and nephew Robert T. Walker, those present who studied theology under Torrance continually bring up the fact that Torrance emphasized this element very strongly in his dogmatics lectures at New College.

³²² *Itinerarium Mentis In Deum: T.F. Torrance—My Theological Development*. The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Series II, Box 10.

published works are on Reformed theology. His *School of Faith*,³²³ originally published in 1959 is a collection of Reformed catechisms and contains a lengthy introduction to Reformed theology by Torrance. In addition to this Torrance wrote *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*³²⁴ early in his academic career (1957) and co-edited John Calvin's commentaries (with his brother D.W. Torrance). Torrance was also an early commentator on Barth³²⁵ and he spearheaded the translation of the *Church Dogmatics* into English. Finally, Torrance spent his early years in the academy at Auburn Seminary in New York and he was a long-time friend of Princeton Theological Seminary.³²⁶ Throughout his years Torrance was no stranger to Princeton and spent much time there. Theologically, Torrance emphasized typically Reformed theological themes such as election, *solus Christus* (Christ alone), *sola fide* (faith alone), and *sola gratia* (grace alone). Though, there were limits to Torrance's engagement with Reformed theology and the subsequent chapters of this thesis will show that Torrance's appropriation of Reformed theology influenced him to offer major reformulation of some of these classical Reformed tenets.³²⁷

³²³ Thomas F. Torrance, *The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church*, Reprint (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1996)

³²⁴ Thomas F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957).

³²⁵ Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology, 1910–1931* (London: SCM Press, 1962).

³²⁶ See Alister McGrath, *T.F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 47–58 for an account of Torrance's work in Auburn and early years in Princeton and 59–85 for an account of Torrance's time as a chaplain. Torrance returned to Europe when World War Two broke out. However he came back to Princeton often and his intellectual legacy (in the form of his manuscript collection) is stored in the archives at the seminary.

³²⁷ For example, Torrance is critical of the hyper-Calvinism of the Westminster Standards, preferring the more biblical approach of the earlier Reformed catechisms (as opposed to the idiosyncratic

This evangelical and Reformed perspective informed Torrance's approach to the church Fathers. However, as this thesis shall argue, Torrance was not rigidly Reformed in that anything which did not fit into Reformed theology was removed from the Fathers. Rather, Torrance allowed the Fathers and his own Reformed evangelical tradition to dynamically inform and reform one another. Indeed, the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* is a reformulation of both Greek patristic theology and Reformed evangelical theology on the basis of one another. This was due, in part, to Torrance's conception of the Reformed tradition. Torrance states, "The Reformation was not a movement to refound the Church, or to found a new Church..."³²⁸ Accordingly, Torrance, as a member of the Reformed tradition, saw himself standing within an ongoing movement of reform with the catholic church.³²⁹ Furthermore, conceiving of himself as standing with the Reformers, Torrance understood a recovery of the patristic tradition as the means of reform and he tries to combat perversions of the Gospel in the modern church in the same

approach of the Westminster), the more Christological and evangelical approach of the early Reformed catechisms (as opposed to the more abstract approach of Westminster), the more scientific approach of the earlier Reformed catechisms expounding doctrine in light of "its own inherent patterns" (as opposed to the more rationalistic approach of Westminster), and the emphasis on the incarnation of the earlier catechisms (as opposed to the emphasis on human appropriation of salvation in Westminster). See *School of Faith*, xvii–xviii. Torrance prefers, more broadly, an approach of "Christological criticism" whereby the Person and Work of Christ act as a corrective to various forms of doctrinal and pietistic perversions. He sees this is in line with Calvin and the classical Reformed theologians. See Thomas F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: Volume 1: Order & Disorder* (London: Lutterworth, 1959), 89–103.

³²⁸ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement: Volume 1*, 77. This chapter in *Conflict and Agreement: Volume 1* outlines Torrance's conception of the Reformed tradition. See 76–89.

³²⁹ Torrance's conception of his own Reformed and evangelical tradition as part of the wider catholic tradition goes deeper than these theological assertions. He sees a version of Presbyterianism (really, a Presbyterian-Episcopal hybrid) to have been the preferred ecclesiastical order of the ancient church, the Reformers, and large parts of the Scottish Reformed tradition. See *Conflict and Agreement: Volume 1*, 85–89. See also Torrance, *Royal Priesthood: A Theology of Ordained Ministry*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993) for a much fuller elaboration upon this point. See chapter four of this thesis for further expansion of this topic.

manner as the Reformers where “...the teaching of the fathers was resurrected against the schoolmen.”³³⁰ Accordingly, Torrance did not consider the recovery of the *Consensus Patrum* to be something novel; rather, he considered it to be the traditional means of reformation of corruption in the church.

There are numerous parallel elements as well as divergences between Torrance’s notion of the *Consensus Patrum* and the vision of the groups of theologians discussed in this chapter. As will be discussed in the following chapter, Torrance’s notion of the *consensus* is rooted in the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ and the epistemological and soteriological implications that surround them, as Torrance sees them. This conception is traditionally Protestant in many ways, for example following the Reformed emphasis on the Greek Fathers for the doctrines of Trinity and Christology; yet Torrance also shares elements in common with the Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox, as shall be seen, particularly Florovsky’s call to return to the “mind” of the Fathers and the emphasis on piety, John Behr’s Christo-centrism, and the Roman Catholic notion of “development of doctrine.” So, ultimately, Torrance’s vision of the *consensus* is unique in relation to others’ notions of the *consensus* including his own Reformed tradition.

Torrance’s conception of the *consensus* is not numerical in any way. For him, the *consensus* can not be measured in an empirical sense at all. Rather, as noted in the introduction of this thesis, for him the *consensus* is referred to as

³³⁰ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement: Volume 1*, 79.

“classical theology” and the following two chapters will explore how it is more of a shared mindset and conviction, centered upon the fulcrum of the ὁμοούσιον.

However, Torrance’s view has certain similarities to the Catholic view of the development of doctrine. Torrance does not explore the notion as such explicitly anywhere. Yet, for him different eras of the history of theology provided different areas of theological development. For example, as shall be seen, he sees the Fathers as contributing an emphasis on the being of God in his acts, and Reformers, the acts of God in his being, and Karl Barth bringing the two together. Furthermore, Torrance, in many ways, sees Athanasius and Karl Barth as mutually informing one another owing to their shared theological conviction surrounding the being of God and the acts of God. Therefore, though Athanasius may not have used Barthian language, Torrance feels comfortable putting Barthian-type words in his mouth. No doubt, this is not exactly the same as Newman’s development of doctrine, but there is some overlap.

Torrance’s notion of the *consensus* is most similar to the traditional Protestant conception. The first aspect of notability is that his overall vision is basically the same. Though, Torrance does not explicitly define any era of orthodoxy or intentionally identify a “golden era,” practically, classical orthodoxy ended with Cyril of Alexandria. Though he does refer to Leontius of Byzantium and Severus of Antioch, he sees them as basically explicating Cyrilline theology. Therefore, in practice Torrance sees a golden era of patristic theology, namely, from Irenaeus to Cyril of Alexandria. Second, Torrance’s genealogy of church

history has significant similarity to that of Philip Schaff inasmuch as they both view an evangelical stream faithful to the Gospel running through church history. The following chapters of this thesis will unpack these elements in full.

In conclusion, Torrance's vision of the *Consensus Patrum* shares many traits with other views. Yet, it is also unique. Mainly, Torrance's uniqueness lies in his rooting the *consensus* in the ὁμοούσιον and Athanasius, and more generally, catholic themes and figures. His vision is a unique synthesis of Reformed and Patristic orthodoxy, centred on the Person of Christ. Herein, he provides a way forward for ecumenical rapprochement between different Christian denominations also rooted in the theology of the Fathers. Furthermore, Torrance provides a helpful example for others within the evangelical tradition who are currently returning to the Fathers inasmuch as these theologians often lack both an objective guide for appropriation and tend towards either a numerical *consensus* and/or an emphasis on Augustine. It is therefore to an exploration of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum*, consisting of truly catholic ("ecumenical") themes and figures, to which this thesis shall now turn. Chapter two will explore the catholic themes and chapter three will explore the catholic figures.

Chapter 2

T.F. Torrance's *Consensus Patrum*: Catholic themes

“The Word of the Lord which came through the Ecumenical Synod at Nicaea, abides forever:”¹

Πιστεύω εἰς ἕνα Θεόν, Πατέρα, Παντοκράτορα, ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς, ὁρατῶν τε πάντων καὶ ἀοράτων. Καὶ εἰς ἕνα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων· φῶς ἐκ φωτός, Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα, **ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ**, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο. Τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς Παρθένου καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα. Σταυρωθέντα τε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, καὶ παθόντα καὶ ταφέντα. Καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ κατὰ τὰς Γραφάς. Καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ καθεζόμενον ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ Πατρὸς. Καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον μετὰ δόξης κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, οὗ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ ἔσται τέλος. Καὶ εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, τὸ κύριον, τὸ ζωοποιόν, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, τὸ σὺν Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ συμπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον, τὸ λαλῆσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν. Εἰς μίαν, Ἁγίαν, Καθολικὴν καὶ Ἀποστολικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν. Ὁμολογῶ ἓν βάπτισμα εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. Προσδοκῶ ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν. Καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. Ἀμήν

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

*The ὁμοούσιος τῷ Πατρὶ was revolutionary and decisive: it expressed the fact that what God is 'toward us' and 'in the midst of us' in and through the Word made flesh, he really is **in himself**; that he is in **internal relations** of his transcendent being the very same Father, Son and Holy Spirit that he is in his revealing and saving activity in time and space toward mankind.*

Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 130.

2.1 Introduction

In a letter to Torrance in 1988, Torrance's friend and ecumenical dialogue partner and the then Eastern Orthodox Archbishop Methodios of Aksum, writes “I admire your patristic expressions and your use of catholic terms...”² The last

¹ “[By saying this Athanasius] did not mean that any new revelation from God had been given to the bishops in the Council at Nicaea, but only that they had been instrumental under God, in handing on in a true and faithful way the very Word of God, which they themselves had received from the apostle's teaching in Holy Scripture regarding God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” See Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 15.

² The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 172.

chapter explored the different approaches to the *Consensus Patrum* in Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism. Furthermore, the last chapter argued that by Torrance's time the Fathers were basically viewed as the inheritance of Catholics, Orthodox, and liberal Protestants and that, because of this, many evangelicals have, relatively recently, begun to "discover" the Greek Fathers but continue to approach them with, at best, a Western lens. However many of the evangelicals explored approach the Fathers with a subjective lens and some even conclude there is a need to convert to Orthodoxy or Catholicism. Therefore, Torrance's approach to the Greek Fathers on their own terms as a Reformed evangelical is unique.

The central claim of this thesis is that Torrance's use of the Fathers is an imaginative and creative reconstruction³ of the Fathers into a Reformed and evangelical version of the *Consensus Patrum*, centered on Christology and involving substantial changes to his own tradition and fresh insight into and sometimes even reformulation of traditional readings of the patristic tradition, portraying the Fathers as the inheritance of the Reformed evangelical tradition. This chapter shall examine how this involves (from the Reformed evangelical side) a focus upon the Word of God and a centeredness on the fulcrum of the Nicene *ὁμοούσιον* (and therein Trinity and Christology) and an evangelical commitment to salvation by

³ Torrance uses the language of "reconstruction" throughout his many texts. In this instance, the term is being used akin to Torrance in his dogmatics lectures where he reconstructs "classic doctrines" by combining patristic and Reformed theology. See e.g. Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 85–86.

grace and the divine initiative⁴ in salvation and revelation and (from the patristic side) a commitment to truly Greek patristic themes. Torrance departs from traditional Reformed creeds and confessions (though he considers many of them to have merit) and returns to classical and ecumenical theological themes. However, his return to the Fathers is not simply a reading of them; to take the language of Archbishop Methodios a step further, Torrance not only imaginatively uses “patristic expressions” and “catholic terms” but his reading and appropriation of the classical church Fathers consists of an imaginative reconstruction of “catholic themes and catholic figures” into the Torrancian Reformed evangelical version of the *Consensus Patrum*.

Torrance’s imaginative reconstruction allows Torrance to draw out elements and nuances not previously seen in patristic theology. Torrance is a *western* theologian approaching the *Greek* Fathers. This is a unique endeavor in itself. As last chapter showed, the Western tradition (Protestant and Roman Catholic) has always seen itself in line with the ancient church but their emphasis has tended to be upon Augustine and the Augustinian tradition. Torrance does more than simply interpret the Fathers; rather, he uses them as theological conversation partners at the great ecumenical and historical table of Christianity. While using the Fathers as theological dialogue partners, Torrance employs the Fathers imaginatively in two primary ways, first by having a ὁμοούσιον and

⁴ The term is H.R. Mackintosh’s and this commitment drives much of Torrance’s theology. See H. R. Mackintosh, *The Divine Initiative*, (London: Student Christian Movement, 1921).

Athanasian centered reading of the Fathers and second, by reading and appropriating the Fathers theologically as opposed to patrologically.

Torrance approaches the Fathers as a dogmatician and not as a patrologist.⁵

In essence Torrance reads and appropriates the Fathers Christologically and thematically rather than historically. Thus, Torrance's reading and use of the Fathers neither simply resembles traditional patrology nor traditional Protestant dogmatic theology but is rather a truly unique Reformed and evangelical reconstruction of patristic theology involving reform of his own tradition. As such, Torrance's project has much to offer contemporary systematic and evangelical theology, and, indeed, patrology as a unique "evangelical patristic dogmatics." Throughout his many texts where he appropriates the Fathers, Torrance remains consistently centered on this imaginative reconstruction of the Fathers which allows him fresh insight into the Fathers by means of his imaginative connections, re-reading, and re-situating of the Fathers by bringing fresh questions to the Fathers and attempting to imaginatively reconstruct their answers in order to explore their relevance in his own theological context.

Torrance's book *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Faith of the Ancient Catholic Church* was originally delivered as the Warfield Lectures at Princeton

⁵ John Behr contends that there are many problems with modern studies of the Fathers, primarily because it has become mainly a study of Late Antiquity rather than theology. See Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 18. *Trinitarian Faith* is not a study of Late Antiquity. In fact, there is hardly any pure historical discussion; rather, it is an entirely theological reading of early Christian history (i.e. reconstructed in light of God's self-revelation).

Theological Seminary in 1981 and later published in 1987.⁶ The book is, in many regards, his *magnum opus*, indeed the flowering of both his dogmatic and scientific theology not to mention his interpretation and appropriation of the patristic tradition and construction of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum*. Owing to the Reformed/dogmatic centeredness of the book, the historical and ecumenical scope, and the evangelical commitments, the book is a truly unique work.⁷ The book is not simply a work of patrology nor is it purely a systematic theology. It stands as an example of Torrance's reading of the *Consensus Patrum* and as such provides a helpful starting point for a case study in this thesis. Torrance is, generally, an extremely consistent theologian and thus his multitude of other texts dealing with the Fathers have been used to supplement the material in *Trinitarian Faith* and any divergence or development will be examined.

Throughout *Trinitarian Faith* (and beyond) Torrance orchestrates his patristic dogmatics by means of various themes and figures. Many of the themes are traditional Torrancian themes, albeit with patristic nuances, whereas he extrapolates others directly from the Fathers and are accordingly more explicitly patristic in nature. For Torrance, reading and appropriating the Fathers in this way is an essential part of his much greater theological methodology of evangelizing the foundations of Western thought discussed in the previous chapter.

⁶ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 1–10.

⁷ George Hunsinger states: "If I could recommend only one book that explains the faith that unites the world's more than 2 billion Christians—Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox—this would be it. Learned and profound, it is perhaps Torrance's most readable work." See Hunsinger, "5 Picks: Essential Theology Books of the Past 25 Years," *Christian Century* 127, no. 21 (2010): 38.

This chapter will first explore Torrance's methodology as it pertains to his reading of the *Consensus Patrum*. Herein, the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* will be introduced and Torrance's conception of theology as dogmatic, scientific, and ecumenical/historical will be discussed. Secondly, Torrance's use of the Fathers in *Trinitarian Faith* will be explored in detail. In this section, the editions, figures, and texts in use on Torrance's *Consensus Patrum* palate will be unpacked, Torrance's possible filters for reading the Fathers, and his indwelling of the patristic mind will be explored. Following this, the major themes in the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* as found most clearly in his magisterial text *The Trinitarian Faith* will be discussed: Christology and the ὁμοούσιον, Trinity and Pneumatology, epistemological objectivity, creation, ecclesiology and the sacraments, asceticism, the vicarious humanity, and the Latin and Greek views of the atonement. This chapter shall explore how Torrance returns to these explicitly Greek patristic themes on their own terms. However, Torrance does not return to them in a narrowly patristic way becoming a patristic fundamentalist; rather, Torrance retrieves these Greek patristic themes in a Reformed and evangelical way. However, Torrance is also not narrowly Reformed. Rather, Torrance creatively constructs the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* by allowing the Greek patristic tradition and his own Reformed evangelical tradition to mutually inform and, indeed, reform one another in a very dynamic way. Thus, this chapter shall explore how Torrance's approach to these themes is through a Reformed evangelical lens; however, his own Reformed

evangelical lens is, in turn, reformed by means of what Torrance finds in the Greek Fathers.

2.2 Torrance's patristic dogmatics

Though the Fathers undergird Torrance's entire theology, lying behind all of his dogmatic thought,⁸ *Trinitarian Faith* is absolutely distinctive among his works inasmuch as in it Torrance explores the patristic theological tradition as it was put forward in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Furthermore, it is essential to keep in mind what Torrance is trying to do and not trying to do in *Trinitarian Faith*.⁹ First, there are two things that Torrance is not trying to do. On the one hand, Torrance is not attempting to offer a systematic theology textbook. He had hopes of doing this at some point in his life and his recently published dogmatics lectures from New College are, in many ways, a posthumous actualization of this vision.¹⁰ By any account, *Trinitarian Faith* is dogmatic and systematic but it is not a systematic theology text. Secondly, *Trinitarian Faith* is not a work of patrology.¹¹ In *Trinitarian Faith* Torrance is not attempting to offer a study on the fourth century in particular or late antiquity in general. Rather, *Trinitarian Faith* is a

⁸ Torrance says that the Greek fathers shaped his work from the beginning of his theological development. See *Itinerarium Mentis In Deum: T.F. Torrance—My Theological Development*. The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Series II, Box 10: Autobiographical Writings of Thomas F. Torrance, Princeton Seminary.

⁹ It is notable that even the title of the book discloses Torrance's approach: *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*. In other words, *The Trinitarian Faith* is Torrance's exposition of a truly ecumenical faith which he sees as both Trinitarian and evangelical.

¹⁰ Compiled and published by his nephew and former student Robert Torrance Walker. See Torrance, *Incarnation*; Torrance, *Atonement*.

¹¹ "The scientific study of the church Fathers." Quasten's is the classic work, however there are a plethora of them. See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology: V. 1–5*, Reprint (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2000). The text was first published in English in 1950.

study of the classical theology of the church Fathers. The book is a discussion of the “evangelical and apostolic faith”¹² of the fourth century and Torrance means it as an introduction and handbook for students.¹³ Within the text Torrance traces the “inner theological connections that gave coherent structure to the classical theology of the ancient Catholic Church.”¹⁴ The organization of *Trinitarian Faith* follows the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (especially its lynchpin according to Torrance, the *ὁμοούσιον*) and each chapter consists of an explication of the main elements of the Creed on the basis of what Torrance considers to be “classical theology.”

Torrance garners a number of elements from the Fathers which, in turn, guide his reading of the “inner connections” of classical theology, namely, that theology is inherently dogmatic, scientific, ecumenical, and historical. Thus the Torrancian *consensus* is a very dynamic entity. Torrance sees the classical Fathers following these same commitments and thus extracts them from the Fathers; he also applies these commitments to his reading of the Fathers. It is essential to

¹² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 1.

¹³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 1. Perhaps taking for his inspiration the magisterial text of his beloved teacher on Christology. See H.R. Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark), vii.

¹⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 2. Robert T. Walker helpfully clarifies that in Torrance’s theological jargon “the phrase ‘inner logic’ represents a concept which is central to Torrance’s theology and which he uses at key points to denote the essential structure and inherent significance of something. The word ‘inner’ refers to its intrinsic nature, underlying fundamental pattern, and the precise relations embedded within and constitutive of it, while ‘logic’ refers to its meaning and significance, the rationale and intelligibility inherent in it and its internal structural relations. Torrance uses ‘inner logic’ or ‘interior logic’ with reference to the bible, Christology and theological knowledge and sometimes simply ‘logic’ to speak of ‘the logic of grace’ and ‘the logic of Christ’.” See Robert T. Walker, “Incarnation and Atonement: Their Relation and Inter-Relation in the Theology of T.F. Torrance,” *Participatio: The Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* 3 (2012): 5. Thus, for Torrance, to study the “inner logic” of something meant to look at the meaning behind it, which necessarily entails going beyond its surface meaning.

briefly unpack these core elements of Torrance in order to understand how he does theology and how he appropriates the Fathers and constructs them into a truly Torrancian *Consensus Patrum*. These themes are absolutely foundational for Torrance and drive his reconstruction of the Fathers. They will arise more concretely in the patristic themes that Torrance sees as core to the *consensus* as put forward in *Trinitarian Faith* and even more concretely in the specific themes Torrance sees in the major Fathers of the *consensus*.

First, theology is inherently dogmatic. By dogmatic, Torrance means a binding centeredness on the Word. As Torrance puts it:

In the set of theological disciplines, dogmatics is the ‘pure science’ in which we are concerned to penetrate down to the basic realities about which we must view an account, and which we are compelled to think out in accordance with their own nature and the basic principles we derive from them. In dogmatics, then, theology is bound to its given object, God’s Word addressed to us in Jesus Christ, and develops its understanding of it in accordance with its nature and with the way in which it is actually disclosed to us in history.¹⁵

This means that theology and theological exercises must necessarily always be focused on the Word of God, that is, Jesus Christ. This is, in many regards, a commitment to doing theology in the Reformed fashion and thus “dogmatic” could very well be considered synonymous with “Reformed” for Torrance.¹⁶ Therefore, whether one does theology on the basis of the Scriptures, the classical theology of a figure such as Athanasius, or simply reflects theologically, the activity must always remain dogmatic. To be otherwise focused ultimately causes the activity to no

¹⁵ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 6. According to Torrance, Reformed theology positively developed dogmatics in a significant way.

¹⁶ See Torrance’s discussion of Reformed theology’s championing of “dogmatic science” in Endnote 1 to *Incarnation* on pp. 257–260.

longer be theology but mythology, a distinction Torrance sees in Athanasius. Equally important for Torrance in this regard is the “evangelical” nature of theology, particularly his study of the Fathers. Torrance believes that the Greek Fathers can be best understood in light of the evangelical perspective of the Reformation.¹⁷

Secondly, theology is inherently scientific. This means that theology has to do with study of an object as it is in itself and therefore must be defined by terms in accordance with that object in itself.¹⁸ Thus, in truly scientific theological study, the focus must be on God and the object (God) must define the way in which theologians speak about God. In the case of theology, because of the Creator/creature divide, talk about God can only be done on the basis of what God says about himself; that is, in his Word by his Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, theology is inherently ecumenical and historical. The ecumenical and historical character of theology has to do with its dogmatic and scientific nature. Since theology is rooted in the Word and is conversation about and dialogue with God, it must necessarily engage with what others have said in their own dialogue with God, both ecumenically and historically.¹⁹ Therefore, when doing theology

¹⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 21–22.

¹⁸ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 51: “Scientific knowledge was held [by the Fathers, specifically the Alexandrian Fathers,] to result from inquiry strictly in accordance with the nature of the reality being investigated, that is, knowledge of it reached under the constraint of what it actually and essentially is in itself, and not according to arbitrary convention.”

¹⁹ Torrance, Introduction to *The School of Faith*, lxvii–lxviii: “Theology must engage in historical studies just because it is historical dialogue with God. It must seek to understand the mind of all the previous generations in the Church, and in the light of their hearing of the Word and understanding of the Truth hear the Word and seek to understand the Truth anew for itself...Theology must engage

dogmatically and scientifically, theology must also engage with those who did theology in the past and who do theology in the present. As will be seen in this and the following chapter, this is not a simple interpretation of the Fathers, however. Rather, it means bringing contemporary theological questions and issues to the Fathers and constructing answers by means of dogmatic and scientific theology. Thus, by historical Torrance really means “historically informed.”

2.3 Torrance’s use of the Fathers in *Trinitarian Faith*

The most notable aspect to Torrance’s *Trinitarian Faith* from a constructive-theological perspective is the way in which he positively and imaginatively reconstructs and appropriates the theology of the Fathers. However, before exploring this “meat” it is essential to first look at the “bones” of the text, namely, the major texts, editions, and figures that are in use in *Trinitarian Faith* and drive Torrance’s construction of the *Consensus Patrum*.²⁰ Following this it will then be possible to look at the themes that Torrance extrapolates from the Fathers and constructs into the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum*.

Though there are notable exceptions,²¹ Torrance rarely cites a particular edition of a text. Rather, he simply cites the patristic figure and text (e.g.

in ecumenical studies just because it is the dialogue of the one Covenant people with God, and therefore the exposition of theology as hearing of the Word and understanding of the Truth cannot be private to one particular Church any more than it can be private to one generation.”

²⁰ See the Appendix for a full chart of all the patristic sources Torrance cites in *The Trinitarian Faith*.

²¹ For example, Gregory of Nyssa, for whom he often notes that he used one of Werner Jaeger’s editions and Basil the Great, for whom he often notes that he used the *Library of Greek Fathers and Ecclesiastical Writers*. See below.

“Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 3.4”); but he does provide clues as to what the particular edition might be. In the *Foreword to Trinitarian Faith*, he says:

I am very conscious of the great tradition in Patristic scholarship which I have enjoyed for many years, and of my indebtedness to those who have made the original texts so readily available. I have in mind the immense work of J.P. Migne, *Patrologia, Series Graeca et Series Latina*;²² *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*²³ of the Berlin Academy; and not least the new *Library of Greek Fathers and Ecclesiastical Writers*²⁴ still in process of being published in Athens which is very helpful. I have gratefully availed myself of translations in the *Ante-Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*,²⁵ and C.R.B. Shapland *The Letters of St Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*,²⁶ but have often revised or given a new rendering of passages cited.²⁷

Torrance’s shorthand labeling of these texts is not always traditional; but it is generally intuitive; though occasionally there are some ambiguously abbreviated

²² J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina* (Paris: 1844) and J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Cursus Completus Series Graeca*, 165 vols. (Paris: 1857). J.P. Migne (d. 1875) was a French priest who opened a publishing house and published the Greek Fathers in Greek along with a Latin translation and the Latin Fathers cheaply in order to make them more readily available for wide consumption

²³ Adolf von Harnack and Theodor Mommsen, *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller Der Ersten Drei Jahrhunderte* (Berlin: Deutsche Akademie, 1891). This is a text critical collection of Greek patristic writings compiled by Adolf von Harnack and Theodor Mommsen.

²⁴ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΗΣ ΔΙΑΚΟΝΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ. ΒΙΒΛΙΟΘΗΚΗ ΕΛΛΗΩΝ ΠΑΤΕΡΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΚΩΝ ΕΥΓΡΑΦΕΩΝ (*Library of Greek Fathers and Ecclesiastical Writers*), (Athens: 1955ff). This is a series published by the Greek Orthodox Church’s official publishing house which was being published in Greece during Torrance’s time. It was a mass production in Greek of the critical editions of the Greek Fathers without the textual apparatus. It was made readily available because of less stringent copyright laws in Greece in comparison with, for example, Western Europe and North America. During Torrance’s time they were widely available in theological bookstores in Britain. Today, the editions are still readily available in Greece but less so elsewhere.

²⁵ Alexander Roberts, Philip Schaff, and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Reprint (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994); Alexander Roberts, Philip Schaff, and James Donaldson, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series, 14 Volumes*, Reprint (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994); Alexander Roberts et al., eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, 14 Volumes*, Reprint (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994). This is the collection of texts originally translated by Newman, Pusey, and other figures from the Anglican tractarian movement.

²⁶ C.R.B. Shapland, trans., *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951). Until recently this was the only available English translation of this collection of these letters by Athanasius. See St Athanasius the Great and Didymus the Blind, *Works on the Spirit PPS43*, trans. Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Lewis Ayres and ed. John Behr (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011) for the most recent edition published by St Vladimir’s Orthodox Seminary in America.

²⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 11.

titles.²⁸ He often cites an abundance of patristic texts in one footnote separated by either a comma or a semi-colon. In such situations, it is usually clear that Torrance intends the semi-colon to denote a separate reference,²⁹ however, occasionally, he seems to separate references by means of a comma.³⁰

Historically, Torrance is informed primarily by the *Ecclesiastical Histories* of Socrates, Sozomen, Eusebius, and Theodoret.³¹ Absent from Torrance's works are secondary texts on patrology, however. Torrance is not concerned with historical studies.³² His approach to the Greek Fathers is as a Reformed and evangelical theologian. Nevertheless, there are clearly both very explicitly acknowledged (such as Karl Barth and H.R. Mackintosh) and less explicitly acknowledged influences (such as John McLeod Campbell and Adolf von Harnack) upon Torrance's reading of the Fathers.³³ Furthermore, there are a few "guides" whom Torrance

²⁸ To illustrate: Epiphanius, *Ref. Aet. is Refutation of the Aetians*, a text which is part of *Haereses* and *De Fide* is a work titled *Expositio Fide*, which is at the end of *Haereses*. See *Trinitarian Faith*, 223 and 244, respectively, for example. It is clear that Torrance is consistent with his own abbreviations and he often uses the accepted patristic abbreviation or an abbreviation that is fairly obvious. Only occasionally does he use an unclear abbreviation. However, once the text is discovered, it becomes clear why Torrance uses the abbreviation he does.

²⁹ For example, *Trinitarian Faith*, p. 221.

³⁰ For example, *Trinitarian Faith*, p. 292.

³¹ He cites Socrates' *Historica* a total of six times, Sozomen's once, Theodoret's twenty-seven times, and Eusebius of Caesarea's once. He also cites Athanasius' *Historia Arianorum ad Monachos* once. Many scholars accuse Torrance of a one-sided reading of history. See, for example, John Behr, Review of *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* by T.F. Torrance, *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (January 1, 1998): 107. He accuses Torrance of painting a one-sided picture of Athanasius that makes it seem as if there is no disagreement amongst patristic scholars about Athanasius.

³² John Behr speaks somewhat approvingly of Torrance in this regard. Behr, "Divine Meaning Book Review," 104–105. But, as noted above, Behr wants Torrance to be fairer in his depiction of the 4th century.

³³ Duncan Rankin argues that Torrance's view of Athanasius on the atonement was directly from Melville Scott. See Rankin, "Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T.F. Torrance," (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1997), 268; 209; A 83–A 115 referring to Melville Scott, *Athanasius on the Atonement* (Stafford: Mort, 1914). Rankin's critique seems to be somewhat of an afterthought (it

acknowledges to follow in his reading of the Fathers and the patristic era which seem to have influenced his work in *Trinitarian Faith*. Occasionally Torrance does hint at his filters such as G.L. Prestige,³⁴ Georges Florovsky, Methodios Fouyas, and George Dragas.³⁵ Torrance relies upon each of these theologians in a different way and in different aspects of his theology.

G.L. Prestige (1889–1955 C.E.) was a patristics scholar at Oxford University. The primary way in which Torrance uses G.L. Prestige was in regards to specific definitions of theological terms in the Fathers. For example, Torrance adheres to Prestige's definitions of ὁμοούσιον³⁶ and ὑπόστασις.³⁷ Specifically, Torrance, with Prestige, holds that οὐσία refers to the “intrinsic constitution” in the Godhead, and ὑπόστασις refers to “concrete independence” in the Godhead.³⁸ Torrance elsewhere cites Prestige in support of his view of impassibility.³⁹

Georges Florovsky (1893–1979 C.E.) was a Russian Orthodox patristics scholar. Torrance refers to Florovsky a fair amount in his reading of Athanasius. Their paths originally crossed in ecumenical dialogue.⁴⁰ The most significant

was only in an appendix to his thesis) and his evidence is somewhat weak. He bases his conclusions on the fact that he discovered evidence of Torrance checking Scott's text out of the New College library while a student. See the Appendix to Rankin, “Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T.F. Torrance.”

³⁴ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 130.

³⁵ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 96.

³⁶ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 80. See especially footnote 38.

³⁷ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 130.

³⁸ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 10.

³⁹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 248.

⁴⁰ In one of Torrance's early works he ruminates upon the ecumenical relevance of the fact that at a recent dialogue he found “Calvin's language on the lips of Professor Florovsky...” See *Conflict and Agreement: Volume 1*, 227.

references have to do with reading Athanasius over and against the traditional Alexandrian view of Origen and Clement. For example, Torrance argues, citing Florovsky, that Athanasius destroyed the Origenist position that the created universe is necessary to God's own being.⁴¹ Additionally, Torrance cites Florovsky to support his reading of Origen in general.⁴²

Methodios Fouyas was a Greek Orthodox bishop and patristics scholar with whom Torrance had a close friendship. Fouyas was also the bishop who ordained Torrance proto-priest in the Greek Orthodox archdiocese of Alexandria.⁴³ Along with Prestige, Torrance often cites Methodios Fouyas as support for his understanding of theological terms, such as οὐσία.⁴⁴ This is significant, especially in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue, wherein both Fouyas and Torrance were active, Fouyas coming from the Eastern Orthodox side of the discussion, and Torrance from the Reformed.⁴⁵

George Dragas, a former student of Torrance's and patristics scholar, is often referred to in Torrance's later writings. A significant citation occurs when Torrance refers to Dragas, a scholar of Athanasius and Cyril, to support his view that both Athanasius and Cyril held that the Spirit proceeds from the οὐσία and not

⁴¹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 4.

⁴² Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 220–221.

⁴³ This is a much-debated point. However, it is notable that *The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection* in the Princeton Theological Seminary archives contains some evidence that points towards the truthfulness of this claim. See Box 214 which contains a slew of pectoral crosses, some of which are only given to ordained Orthodox priests. There is also a picture of Torrance wearing the cross, surrounded by a number of Orthodox bishops in Box 202.

⁴⁴ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 80.

⁴⁵ Methodios will be discussed in more detail in chapter four of this thesis in regards to Torrance's ecumenical relevance.

ὑπόστασις of the Father.⁴⁶ Torrance agrees with Dragas on a number of issues and includes him in his text *The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*.⁴⁷

Theologically, Torrance is informed by a large corpus of patristic figures. Throughout *Trinitarian Faith* Torrance cites Epiphanius of Salamis a total of three hundred and eighty-two times, the majority of which are in *Chapter 6: The Eternal Spirit*; he cites Irenaeus of Lyons a total of two hundred and ninety-three times; he cites Gregory Nazianzen a total of two hundred and eighty-four times, throughout *Trinitarian Faith*; he cites Basil the Great a total of two hundred and seventy-six times, throughout the book, but notably in *Chapter 6*; he cites Origen a total of one hundred and ninety-two times, mostly in the first chapter, *Faith and Godliness*; he cites Didymus the Blind a total of one hundred and eighty-five times, most often in *Chapter 6*; he cites Hilary of Poitiers a total of one hundred and eighty times; and he cites Cyril of Jerusalem a total of ninety-five times.

By far, the figure Torrance cites and references the most in *Trinitarian Faith* is Athanasius of Alexandria. Torrance cites Athanasius a total of one thousand one hundred and ninety-seven times throughout the book. Torrance cites him consistently throughout the text and Torrance's reading of Athanasius' theology clearly informs Torrance's conception of the *Consensus Patrum* in a major way. However, there are certain Fathers that do show up more than Athanasius in

⁴⁶ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 192.

⁴⁷ George Dragas, "The Eternal Son," in Thomas Torrance, ed., *The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed A.D. 381* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1981), 16–57.

specific chapters, such as Origen in chapter one, who, in this chapter, shows up nearly twice as many times as Athanasius.

By far the text Torrance cites the most overall is Athanasius' *Contra Arianos* which he cites over four hundred and fifty times.⁴⁸ Torrance also cites Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* frequently, which Torrance references two hundred and sixty-nine times. He also cites Gregory Nazianzen's orations and Basil the Great's epistles in large quantity. Torrance cites Basil's one hundred and ten times. He refers to Gregory's orations two hundred and ninety-one times, most notably, Oration 31 (the *Fifth Theological Oration, On the Holy Spirit*) which he cites forty-eight of those times. He cites Epiphanius' *Haereses* two hundred and sixty-seven times and his *Ancaoratus* ninety-five times. He cites Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catecheses* ninety-four times and Hilary's *De Trinitate* one hundred and seventy-six times. He cites Basil's *On the Holy Spirit* sixty-one times. As with the other authors, while this represents the overall citations and references, in each individual chapter certain figures sometimes dominate the scene.⁴⁹

An examination of *Trinitarian Faith* portrays Torrance as a theologian who was intimately acquainted with the Fathers' writings and mindset.⁵⁰ He knew their

⁴⁸ While the current scholarly consensus tends to view *Contra Arianos IV* as Pseudo-Athanasian in authorship, Torrance contends that it was Athanasian.

⁴⁹ See Appendix.

⁵⁰ See the Appendix for the full listing of patristic figures, sources, and numbers of times cited in *Trinitarian Faith*. While Athanasius, Hilary, Gregory Nazianzen, Irenaeus, and the other "usual suspects" are present as one might expect there are a few surprises which shows that Torrance had read widely and deeply in patristic literature; a suspicion a reader would have upon a study of nearly any of Torrance's texts on the Fathers.

works intimately and truly indwelt their life and thought.⁵¹ Indeed, on each page there is likely to be five or so footnotes, each footnote containing anywhere from ten to fifty patristic citations and references.⁵² Scholars commenting on Torrance's many works in patristic theology have been impressed with his indwelling of primary sources.⁵³

Indeed, Torrance not only reads the Fathers analytically but according to Fr. George Dion. Dragas, "synthetically" and thereby "appropriates the principles of Patristic Theology."⁵⁴ Torrance indwells the life and thought of the Fathers. According to Dragas, "few contemporary theologians in his tradition have so thoroughly and consistently appropriated the spiritual wealth of Greek Patristic Theology."⁵⁵ In many ways, this is because of Torrance's indwelling the Fathers' mindset and imitating their life of piety as well as appropriating their theology into his own context; and, *Trinitarian Faith* is the outcome of this in its purest form. Torrance applies this vision and methodology to all areas of his theology, not least

⁵¹ Torrance says: "In the course of preparing [*Trinitarian Faith*] for publication I re-read the works of the great fathers for each chapter." See Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 1.

⁵² For this and all further references to number of times Torrance referred to an author or texts see the Appendix.

⁵³ Behr, "Divine Meaning Book Review"; Robert L. Wilken, Review of *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* by T.F. Torrance, *Theological Studies* 57, no. 4 (December 1, 1996): 743–744; John D. Morrison, Review of *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* by T.F. Torrance, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35, no. 1 (March 1, 1992): 117–119.

⁵⁴ George Dion. Dragas, "The Significance for the Church of Professor Torrance's Election As Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland," *ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΟΣ ΦΑΡΟΣ* LVIII, no. III–IV (1976): 216.

⁵⁵ Dragas, "The Significance for the Church of Professor Torrance's Election As Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland," 216.

his reading of the *consensus*. Scholars have noted that Torrance's enterprise was done "with the spiritual warmth of a praying theologian."⁵⁶

2.4 Catholic Themes

In *Trinitarian Faith* Torrance discusses a plethora of catholic themes that he sees contained within the Fathers and their inner connections.⁵⁷ These themes, like the catholic figures and streams, which will be explored in chapter three, are a part of Torrance's creative Reformed evangelical reconstruction of the Fathers. In the themes Torrance's imaginative Christ-centered *Consensus Patrum* shines clear. The rest of this chapter shall explore the way in which Torrance approaches these Greek patristic themes on their own terms but reformulates them in a Reformed and evangelical fashion, allowing the Greek Fathers and his Reformed tradition to dynamically inform one another. This chapter will explore how a number of these themes comprise great contributions to contemporary understanding of theology and the Fathers and have much to offer modern systematic theology and patrology. The rest of this chapter will explore the themes in order to see precisely what Torrance is up to in his imaginative reconstruction of the Fathers into his Torrancian Reformed evangelical *Consensus Patrum* and point out Torrance's unique insight and contribution as well as where the possibility of critique exists.

⁵⁶ Paul Copan, Review of *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* by T.F. Torrance, *Trinity Journal* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 246.

⁵⁷ The catholic themes and catholic figures/streams which comprise the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* are intricately connected to one another and, thus, either could probably be discussed first. However, if one had to point to one undergirding the other, it must be said that the catholic themes drove the catholic figures. For, Torrance constructs his streams and made his imaginative connections by means of the underlying themes to which the figures were committed. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the themes and the following chapter will discuss the figures/streams.

The following chapter shall explore the streams which Torrance constructs around the themes and offer comment on some of the gains of Torrance's *consensus*.

The centrality of Christology: The ὁμοούσιον

The Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ⁵⁸ serves as the cornerstone of Torrance's creative Reformed evangelical reconstruction of the church Fathers into the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum*.⁵⁹ Torrance's ὁμοούσιον is taken from Nicene theology and it is a patristic reconstruction of the Reformation principle of *Solus Christus* (Christ alone). As such it exemplifies Torrance's approach to a truly Greek patristic theme, the ὁμοούσιον, from a Reformed and evangelical perspective, namely, Word-centeredness. Torrance sees the flowering of the evangelical theology of the *consensus* in the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον, which, for him, means that "God Himself is the actual content of his revelation and God Himself is really in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to Himself."⁶⁰ The core of the Torrancian *consensus* is the ὁμοούσιον and for Torrance all theology must be centered upon it in an objective and realist manner. In this way it affects all other doctrines and acts as a lynchpin for theology.⁶¹ As such the ὁμοούσιον is the center

⁵⁸ The word ὁμοούσιον comes from the combination of the Greek words ὅμο (same) and οὐσία (stuff/essence) and means "of the same substance or stuff." See G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 958–960 for lexical information. It comes from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed: "We believe...in the Son...who is light of light, very God of very God, of one essence with the Father."

⁵⁹ Notably, Behr commends Torrance for looking at the formation of classical theology with its emphasis on Christology. See Behr, "Divine Meaning Book Review," 105.

⁶⁰ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 7.

⁶¹ Torrance says that it is "the organic pattern integrating all the doctrines of the Christian faith." See Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West*, Reprint (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1996), 264. Notably, scholars at the forefront of patristics studies are approaching the Nicene Fathers along similar lines today. John

of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* and Torrance's entire imaginative reading of the Fathers is done on the basis of it and through it and he reconstructs everything around it. A reading of Torrance portrays the fact that his reconstruction of the patristic dogmatic tradition begins with Christology, for which the ὁμοούσιον is central, and remains anchored there throughout.⁶² For him, everything in theology rests upon this Father-Son relationship and, accordingly, every single one of the themes which arise in *Trinitarian Faith* rests upon and arises from the ὁμοούσιον; indeed they can only be discussed because they do. The famous dictum "all roads lead to Rome" could be inverted and applied to the Torrancian-Athanasian ὁμοούσιον: All roads depart from, go through, and lead back to the ὁμοούσιον.

Chapter one unpacked the historical precedence for this and Torrance's evangelical and Trinitarian approach is in line with historic Reformed Protestantism, particularly John Calvin and his emphasis on Trinity and Christology. Torrance is in line with the Reformed tradition in his approach,

Behr, discussed in the last chapter, has initiated a project in which he contends that the way in which the Fathers did theology was through Christology. See John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology: The Way to Nicaea Vol 1; The Nicene Faith: Part I; The Nicene Faith: Part II* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004); *The Mystery of Christ*. In his introduction to his recently published new translation of Athanasius' *De Incarnatione*, Behr, explaining Athanasius' method and starting point, states, "the starting point is the one who ascended the cross, and the account then is given from this perspective. It is through this that the knowledge of God, and all that this effects, has been revealed." See Behr, Introduction to *Saint Athanasius the Great: On the Incarnation (Greek/English) PPS44a* Greek/English, ed. and trans. John Behr, (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012), 23. Though Behr does not use the exact language of Torrance, his method throughout his works on the Fathers is substantially similar to Torrance and the ὁμοούσιον. See e.g. Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 19 where he argues that theology must be done "through the Cross and in the manner in which the Passion is interpreted and Christ proclaimed." For this is how the Fathers did theology and how it must be done today. See also p. 87 and p. 174.

⁶² Fr. George Dion. Dragas calls this reconstruction of the Fathers on the basis of Christology and appropriation of them into his own Reformed context an "ecumenical historical reconstruction," a "synthetic approach," and a "theological reconstruction." See Dragas, "The Significance for the Church of Professor Torrance's Election As Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland," 214–218.

returning to the Fathers with an emphasis on the Christology, and by means of Christology, the Triadology of classical Christianity.

In his discussion of the ὁμοούσιον, Torrance combines the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον with the Cyrilline doctrine of the “hypostatic union”⁶³ and all the epistemological and soteriological implications according to Torrance. He words this theological concept in a number of ways, most often in the context of discussion about the Fathers as ὁμοούσιον but elsewhere as “realist epistemology” and the “kerygmatic” and “evangelical” proclamation of the Gospel.⁶⁴

For Torrance the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον contains key epistemological and evangelical/soteriological implications. Primarily the ὁμοούσιον means, “God is really like Jesus.”⁶⁵ In turn, this means that because of the ὁμοούσιον God can be known internally in himself.⁶⁶ On account of Jesus’ and the Holy Spirit’s ὁμοούσιον

⁶³ Cyril of Alexandria, *Third Letter to Nestorius*, 8: ὑπόστασεί μία Λογου σεσακομένη (one hypostasis of the Word incarnate). In patristic Greek ὑπόστασις means “subject/person.” Cyril often uses the word φύσις as well and hence his famous phrase: Μία φύσις τοῦ Λογου σεσακομένη. See John Anthony McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy Its History, Theology, and Texts* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 208ff; Quasten, *Patrology: V*, 3, 139. The “hypostatic union” is the “hypostatic becoming” of the Word of God. This did not entail a change for the divine Person or divine Nature, but rather an addition of human nature. In Christ the body/flesh was “hypostatically” united to the Word, that is, the hypostasis and nature of the Word. See Cyril, *Five Tomes Against Nestorius*, 1.4; 2.8; 5.5. In the hypostatic union there is a combination of a fully human nature and a fully divine nature, rooted in one “hypostasis” or subject. Therefore, there would be no person/subject of Jesus but for the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. See also Torrance, *Incarnation*, 181–234 for Torrance’s own exposition on the hypostatic union.

⁶⁴ Combined intrinsically with this is Torrance’s battle against dualism in theology. See Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. Webster, Tanner, and Torrance, 589. As shall be seen throughout this chapter and next chapter, Torrance uses the Fathers to combat dualism which was an activity prevalent across the many areas of his theological and scientific work.

⁶⁵ Thomas F. Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today: The Gospel and Scientific Thinking* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 55–56; Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 86.

⁶⁶ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 241; Torrance, *Atonement*, 236; Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 66–68; 72.

with the Father on the one hand and Jesus' ὁμοούσιον with humankind, on the other hand, God is now knowable as he is in himself by means of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The key point is that Torrance sees the ὁμοούσιον implying epistemologically that God is knowable as he is in himself by means of the Son and the Spirit who are ὁμοούσιον with the Father because it is only through God that humankind can know God.⁶⁷ That is why Arianism and all other heresies, which were inevitably rooted in some form of dualism for Torrance are so problematic.⁶⁸ For, the only reason that anything can be said about God is because of the ὁμοούσιον, the objective reality of God in Christ. The ὁμοούσιον also has key soteriological/evangelical implications. Primarily it means that the acts of Jesus are the acts of God. Thus, God is really in Jesus reconciling the world to himself.⁶⁹ In turn this means that God's οὐσία must necessarily be dynamic as opposed to abstract and his ὑπόστασεις are dynamic subjectifications of God inherent and

⁶⁷ Khaled Anatolios, at the forefront of current patristic scholarship on Nicaea in general and Athanasius in particular, agrees with Torrance substantially on this emphasis. For Anatolios, both Athanasius and Irenaeus insisted upon the same element in their theology: Only God can know God and only God can unite man and God; namely, the intricate connection between soteriology and epistemology similar to Torrance. Anatolios makes much of the connection between Athanasius and Irenaeus in the realm of epistemology and soteriology needing to be from the side of God. Anatolios considers the belief that only God can unite creation to Himself and thus only a divine mediator can renew the image of God within mankind as a major Irenaeian theme. Anatolios asserts that this was a theme that Athanasius picked up and though his early texts *De Incarnatione* and *Contra Gentes* were both slightly Irenaeian, it was not until *Contra Arianos* that a strong Irenaeus-Athanasius connection could be clearly detected in this regard. See Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought The Coherence of His Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2004) , 205–207.

⁶⁸ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 119: "It is not surprising that the Nicene fathers considered Arianism as the most dangerous heresy, for it struck at the very roots of the Church's faith by calling in question the divine reality of Christ's revelation and saving activity, not to speak of their human actuality."

⁶⁹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 7.

internal to his οὐσία.⁷⁰ For, to put otherwise would be to cut out the possibility of union with God in himself.

In this sense, revelation and reconciliation are inextricably connected. This is one aspect of Torrance's emphasis on the belief that "the evangelical and epistemological significance of the *homoousion* (ὁμοούσιον) is that God Himself is the actual content of his revelation and God Himself is really in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to Himself."⁷¹ One of Torrance's favourite assertions, therefore, was "God is really like Jesus."⁷² This is why the Christian doctrine of God is "inescapably and essentially Christocentric."⁷³ Within this Torrance discusses the essential connection between revelation and reconciliation, the connection between who God is and what God does.⁷⁴ Thus, "[the ὁμοούσιον] clearly asserts, not only that there is no division between the being of the Son and the being of the Father, but that there is no division between the acts of the Son and the acts of God."⁷⁵ This is a theme present nearly everywhere in Torrance's theology. In his intimate connection between the being of God and the acts of God Torrance also

⁷⁰ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 129 citing Athanasius, *De Decretis*, 16ff, 22ff; *Ad Episcopos*, 17f; *Contra Arianos*, 1.16, 28; 2.33; 3.1ff; *Ad Afros*, 4f.

⁷¹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 7. Elsewhere Torrance states: "the pivotal issue here...is the identity (the ταυτότης as Athanasius expressed it) between God and the revelation of Himself, between what he reveals of Himself and of his activity in Jesus Christ what he really is *in-himself* in his own ever-living and dynamic Being." See *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 143. He cites Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 53.

⁷² Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today*, 55–56; Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 86.

⁷³ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 17; Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 2.

⁷⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 135. As he puts it: "The *homoousion* asserts that God is eternally *in-himself* what he is in Jesus Christ, and, therefore, that there is no dark unknown God behind the back of Jesus Christ, but only he who is made known to us in Jesus Christ."

⁷⁵ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 137.

imaginatively applies the ὁμοούσιον to grace.⁷⁶ By directly applying the term to grace Torrance uses the word in a way it had not been done before but allowed the inner meaning of the word to guide his use of it. This is possible, he feels, because of theological objectivity by allowing theological terms to dictate their own meaning. According to Torrance this is core to the patristic method of theology as he argues in his discussion of Alexandrian scientific theological method.⁷⁷

Trinity and Pneumatology⁷⁸

In his Triadological emphasis on God's dynamic being of co-inhering persons, particularly in his Pneumatology, Torrance departs from the traditional Western reading of the *filioque*. Yet, Torrance does not simply return to the Eastern view. Rather, Torrance's Triadology is a Reformed version of the classical Eastern patristic viewpoint.

It is only through the Nicene ὁμοούσιον that Torrance approaches Triadology proper. Torrance holds that for the Nicene Fathers, and especially Athanasius, the ὁμοούσιον, along with preserving the possibility of theology, also safeguards the key evangelical doctrine of the connection between the ontological and immanent Trinity. Torrance holds that the Fathers, especially Athanasius, did not adhere to a general/abstract notion of οὐσία but rather, Torrance argues, as

⁷⁶ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 225. Torrance considers grace to be intrinsically personal as it was connected to the Person of Jesus Christ. See Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today*, 20–21.

⁷⁷ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 239–266.

⁷⁸ See Jason Radcliff, "Thomas F. Torrance's Conception of the Consensus Patrum on the Doctrine of Pneumatology" in *Studia Patristica LXIX* (Leuven: Peeters, 2013) for a similar and somewhat expanded account of the following section.

was made clear in Athanasius's conception of God's word and act intrinsic to his being, the term has "an intensely personal and concrete meaning."⁷⁹ Torrance wants to preserve the dynamic nature of the οὐσία because he sees the term as personal as opposed to abstract and static, a view which he contends is Athanasian.⁸⁰ Here Torrance contends that Athanasius held, citing G.L Prestige, "hypostasis lays stress on concrete independence, ousia lays stress on intrinsic constitution. Hypostasis means 'a reality *ad alios*', ousia 'a reality *in se*'; the one word denotes God as manifest, the other connotes God as being."⁸¹ For Torrance, this means "being in internal relations."⁸² Embedded within this is Torrance's discussion of περιχώρησις (*perichoresis*). For Torrance this term implies the mutual indwelling of each member of the Trinity.⁸³

Torrance makes it clear that Athanasius was consistent with his scientific method and never proposed that Triadological terms be defined statically; thus, the terms remain open and dynamic. However, Torrance asserts that Athanasius adhered to the view as explicated above.⁸⁴ For, Torrance contends, if God were disconnected from his acts, their soteriological significance would fall away, a

⁷⁹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 129 citing Athanasius, *De Decretis*, 16ff, 22ff; *Ad Episcopos*, 17f; *Contra Arianos*, 1.16, 28; 2.33; 3.1ff; *Ad Afros*, 4f. See *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 125–129 for the full discussion. Put otherwise, "the gift and the Giver are the same." See Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 9. See also 218–219 where Torrance cited Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, 2:2, 38 referring to Athanasius' conception of ἐνούσιος ἐνέργεια (*energy intrinsic to essence*).

⁸⁰ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 104.

⁸¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 15.

⁸² See Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 243–244.

⁸³ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 102–103.

⁸⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 15 citing Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* I.II; 2.10; 3.63; *De Decretis* 22, 27; *De Synodis* 35, 41; *Ad Afros* 4.8; *Ad Serapionem* 2.5.

theological struggle both the Eastern Church and the Western Church have experienced.⁸⁵

Torrance propagates the Athanasian concept of ἐνούσιος λόγος (*word intrinsic to essence*) in support of the dual view that (a) God's οὐσία is dynamic and (b) God's λόγος is intrinsic/inherent to God's οὐσία, two concepts arising directly from his conception of the ὁμοούσιον.⁸⁶ Herein the key doctrine that God really is like Jesus is preserved.⁸⁷ Indeed, Torrance contends that Athanasius asserted this doctrine because of his doctrine of revelation through Christ⁸⁸ since his approach to knowledge of God was strictly through the Son.⁸⁹ In support of this, Torrance asserts that Athanasius and Gregory Nazianzen held that the Son comes not from the person of the Father but from his being.⁹⁰

Torrance applies the ὁμοούσιον directly to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.⁹¹ Torrance's Pneumatological reconstruction of the Greek Fathers is, once again, from a Reformed evangelical perspective. He approaches the Greek Fathers on their own terms and, thus, was generally opposed to the *filioque*.⁹² However,

⁸⁵ See Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 461–482 for a discussion of the Western problem.

⁸⁶ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 125–126. See also *Theology in Reconciliation*, 226—227.

⁸⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 86.

⁸⁸ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 111.

⁸⁹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 2.

⁹⁰ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 140–141. More on this below and in the following chapter.

⁹¹ See Victor Shepherd, "Thomas F. Torrance and the Homoousion of the Holy Spirit," *Participatio: The Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* 3 (2012): 108–124 for an excellent account.

⁹² Though some were more open to the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son than others, such as Maximus the Confessor. See Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) for an excellent overview of the *filioque*. See

because of his Protestant perspective he is sympathetic to the mindset behind the *filioque*. As such, Torrance offers an ecumenical approach to the doctrine of the Trinity. Here, again, Athanasius is central, primarily his *Ad Serapionem* and *Contra Arianos*. For Torrance, Athanasius began his Pneumatology from a soteriological⁹³ and Christological⁹⁴ starting point because of the epistemological centrality of the Son.⁹⁵ Furthermore, for Torrance the Spirit's role is primarily to reveal the Son and therein also the Father.⁹⁶ This also means that the ὁμοούσιον of the Spirit means practically the same thing as the ὁμοούσιον of the Son, albeit with different emphases and certain nuances.

As in the ὁμοούσιον of the Son, Torrance sees epistemological significance in the ὁμοούσιον of the Holy Spirit. Torrance contends that because of the Creator-creature distinction it is only possible to know God through God and, therefore, God himself needed to unite himself to humans, which was done by means of the

especially pp. 73–86 on Maximus. There is notable overlap in the irenic approaches of Torrance and Maximus in this debate.

⁹³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 209 citing Athanasius, *Ad Serapionem*, 1.23-1.27; Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 11.

⁹⁴ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 17; Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 2; Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 214: "This does not mean that Athanasius begins with the doctrine of the Son, merely because that has already been established, but that this is the only proper procedure because of the propriety of the Spirit to the Son, and because it is only in and through the Son or the Word that God has revealed himself."

⁹⁵ Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 8-11.

⁹⁶ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 211 citing Didymus the Blind, Epiphanius of Salamis, and Cyril of Jerusalem: "The Holy Spirit is not directly known in his own hypostasis for he remains veiled by the very revelation of the Father and the Son which he brings." Torrance sees this view also put forth in the famous quote by Gregory Nazianzen, loved by the Reformer John Calvin: "No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am enlightened by the radiance of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one. When I think of any one I think of him as the whole, and my vision is filled, and the greater part of what I conceive escapes me...I see by one luminary, and cannot divide or measure out the undivided light." See *Trinitarian Faith*, 213 and also Gregory Nazianzen *Oration* 40.1 and John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.17.

incarnation of the Son and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁷ Torrance writes, citing Athanasius, Epiphanius, Didymus, and Cyril of Jerusalem that humankind “may know the Spirit of the Father and the Son only as he dwells in [them] and brings [them] into the communion of the Holy Trinity.”⁹⁸

For Torrance God’s οὐσία refers to God’s “being in internal relations.”⁹⁹ This is by no means an *a priori* assertion. Rather, Torrance sees this flowing from the ὁμοούσιον. Owing to the fact that the ὁμοούσιον means that God is immediately present with humankind by means of Christ and the Spirit it necessarily follows that God’s οὐσία is dynamic and personal.¹⁰⁰ Torrance argues that a thoroughly Athanasian Triadology focuses on the wholeness of the Godhead and views each person of the Trinity “in terms of their coinherent and undivided wholeness, in which each person is ‘whole of the whole.’”¹⁰¹

Torrance believes this is rooted in Athanasius’ method and starting point, namely the doctrine of ὁμοούσιον and its implications for the identity of the giver

⁹⁷ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 60–61; Torrance, *God and Rationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 165–192; Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 13; Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 232–241.

⁹⁸ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 208–209. It is notable that Torrance’s connection of Athanasius, Didymus, and Epiphanius is nearly identical to that of H.B. Swete. See Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church: A Study of Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1912), 211–229.

⁹⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 243–244. See also *Trinitarian Faith*, p. 131 for one of Torrance’s many references to a favorite quote by G.L. Prestige.

¹⁰⁰ Torrance’s reading of essence and person are taken from G.L. Prestige, whom he cites often in this context. See e.g. Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 10.

¹⁰¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 238 citing Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, 1.16; 3.1ff; 4.1ff; *Ad Serapion*, 1.16, 26.

of grace and the gift of grace and for the revealer and revelation.¹⁰² Therefore, the acts of the Spirit in the world are really the acts of God himself. Thus, Torrance sees God's dynamic οὐσία as the starting point for Athanasius and the greater *consensus*.

In turn, this means for Torrance that the Spirit must be conceived as being enhypostatic in the οὐσία of God.¹⁰³ Torrance garners this primarily from Epiphanius of Salamis¹⁰⁴ and Didymus the Blind,¹⁰⁵ though he feels it is a thoroughly Athanasian assertion.¹⁰⁶ For Torrance this means that the Spirit indwells within the οὐσία of God. This enhypostatic indwelling of the Spirit within the οὐσία of God gives the doctrine of the Spirit a "profound objectivity."¹⁰⁷ Torrance finds this in Athanasius and understands it to have preserved Pneumatology from any sort of subjective inwardness, whether individualistic as Torrance sees in liberal Protestantism or corporate as in Roman Catholic ecclesiology.¹⁰⁸ Torrance sees this enhypostatic indwelling as necessary for the abovementioned epistemological aspects of the ὁμοούσιον of the Spirit to remain true.

¹⁰² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 304–305.

¹⁰³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 223f; 231ff. ἐνυππόστατος: See p. 223.

¹⁰⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 208; 223 citing Epiphanius, *Haereses*, 62.3. See PG 41.1054.

¹⁰⁵ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 223–224 citing Didymus, *De Trin.*, 1.16, 26; 2, 1ff, 8, 10; 3.19, 37; 1.9f, 11, 15f, 18f, 25, 27; 2.1, 3f, 5ff, 15, 18, 26f, 3.2, 15f, 24, 47, 55; *Con. Eun.*, Athens ed. 44, pp. 239, 253, 226ff, 246f, 255ff *De Spiritu Sanctu*, 30–39 (footnotes 158–161).

¹⁰⁶ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 221 referring to Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, 1.20, 33.

¹⁰⁷ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 234 citing Athanasius, *Ad Serapionem*, 1:19, 21, 27, 30; 3:1, 2, 5.

¹⁰⁸ See Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 227–228.

The enhypostatic indwelling of the Spirit means for Torrance that the Spirit proceeds from the οὐσία of the Father. This is neither a procession from the Father and the Son nor a procession from an abstract οὐσία. Rather, the procession of the Spirit is from the dynamic and personal οὐσία of the Father through the Son. For, Torrance contends, citing Athanasius, the Spirit proceeds from the Father and receives from the Son.¹⁰⁹ Torrance admits that Athanasius often used οὐσία and ὑπόστασις as equivalents as in the Nicene anathemas. However, he contends that when Athanasius put forth the view that the Spirit proceeds from the οὐσία of the Father he did not mean ὑπόστασις as would later be asserted by the Cappadocians but rather God's dynamic οὐσία itself.¹¹⁰ For Torrance this assertion is key to preserving the connection between God's economy and ontology. For without the Spirit's procession from the οὐσία of God the Spirit would not be fully and truly God and thus not be full revelation of all who God is in himself.¹¹¹

Torrance's unique contribution to dogmatic theology is very evident in his discussion of the *filioque*. This comes out clearly in his work in the Reformed-Orthodox Dialogue and the subsequently published texts surrounding the Dialogue.¹¹² Torrance sees Athanasius' Triadology and his conception of the

¹⁰⁹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 231 citing Athanasius, *Ad Serapionem*, 1.27; 3.1; 1.2; 4.3; 1.11; 1.20; 3.1; 4.1f; 1.25; 3.1; 4.3f. See also 233–234.

¹¹⁰ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 236 citing Athanasius, *Ad Serapionem*, 1.10, 22, 25, 27; 2.5; 3.1. Cf. J.N.D. Kelly who sees the Cappadocians as basically Athanasian in their Triadology. See J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A. and C. Black, 1958), 263–264. However, others, such as R.P.C. Hanson are more in line with Torrance's distinction. See R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* (London: T & T Clark, 1988) 677–678.

¹¹¹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 26.

¹¹² Thomas F. Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985); Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*; Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*.

procession of the Spirit as cutting behind the divisions between East and West on the matter. Torrance understands there to have been three aspects to Athanasius' Pneumatology significant in this sense: (1) humankind's knowledge of God as Trinity rests entirely upon God's self-revelation and thus implies a dynamic conception of οὐσία, (2) Athanasius' definition of God as Trinity does not presuppose a precise definition of the relation of God's οὐσία to his ὑπόστασις; rather it excludes the possibility of a precise definition, and (3) therefore, Athanasius' Triadology cuts behind the problem altogether as it focuses on the dynamic unity of the Godhead.¹¹³ Torrance understands Athanasius to have not really dealt with the question of the *filioque* explicitly and indeed finds this to be a helpful approach. Rather, in Athanasius Torrance sees a focus on the intricate connection between the Spirit and the Son but no more than this. As Torrance puts it, "Athanasius neither speaks explicitly of a double 'procession' of the Spirit nor rejects it."¹¹⁴ Ultimately, Athanasius spoke of the procession of the Spirit from the Father through the Son; however, Torrance states, "Athanasius could not have gone on to say that the Spirit proceeded from the Father *only* for it would have contradicted his basic theology."¹¹⁵ Torrance sees this same basic outlook put forth by all the "great Eastern Fathers up to Theodoret...not least the well-known passages often adduced in favor of the *filioque*."¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 13–20, especially 18–20.

¹¹⁴ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 235.

¹¹⁵ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 218.

¹¹⁶ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 218–219.

The key for Torrance is that Athanasius started neither from the unity nor the plurality but rather the “coinherent Trinitarian relations.”¹¹⁷ This is indeed a procession of the Spirit from the Father through the Son. Torrance contends that Athanasius’ wording the Trinitarian relations as such was because of his basic presupposition that οὐσία did not mean “being” in the *abstract* but rather “being in internal relations.”¹¹⁸ Thus, Torrance asserts wholeheartedly that the Spirit proceeds from the Father. He sees this to be creedal. This openness on the part of Torrance and the other Reformed in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue allowed for much agreement between Reformed and Orthodox. However, in Torrance’s papers on the dialogue he reflects on his view that there is great significance in the fact that the agreed statement did not say “procession from the Person of the Father” but rather, as it does in the Creed, simply “from the Father.” The agreed statement puts it: “Since there is only one Trinity in Unity, and one Unity in Trinity, there is only one indivisible Godhead, and only one *Arche* (ἀρχή) or *Monarchia* (μοναρχία). As such, however, Gregory the Theologian reminds us, ‘It is a *Μοναρχία* that is not limited to one Person’ (Or. 29.2)...the μία Ἀρχή or *Μοναρχία* is inseparable from the Trinity, the *Μονάς* from the *Τριάς*.”¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the common reflection states “the perfect simplicity and the indivisibility of God in his Triune Being mean that the ἀρχή or *μοναρχία* cannot be limited to one Person, as Gregory the Theologian

¹¹⁷ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 6–7.

¹¹⁸ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 20.

¹¹⁹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 223–224.

pointed out.”¹²⁰ Torrance’s comments concerning “the working paper on the Holy Trinity” from the dialogue are most illuminating. He feels that to limit the μοναρχία to one person would take away from the *perichoretic* Trinitarian relations.¹²¹ Thus it is correct, in Torrance’s estimate, to identify the μοναρχία with the Father but only inasmuch as this μοναρχία is immediately connected to each Person because of Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity.¹²²

The objective nature of theology

In addition to being the core of theology in general and Christology, Triadology, and Pneumatology in particular, Torrance understands the doctrine of ὁμοούσιον to be a hermeneutical and theological key. As such Torrance is, once again, asserting a Reformed evangelical Christocentrism. Torrance holds that the assertions of the Council of Nicaea were the outcome of the Fathers dissecting the inner structure of the Scriptures “by subordinating its mind (διάνοια) to the meaning of the Holy Scriptures and the apostolic mind (φρόνημα), indeed the Mind of Christ (νοῦς).”¹²³ Thus the concept is a theme arising from theological thinking and, in turn, guiding theological thinking. Herein it acts as a σκοπός (*scope, goal, end*).¹²⁴ This occurs on two levels, the scope of Scripture and the scope of faith.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 231.

¹²¹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 121.

¹²² Cf. Zizioulas who holds that the μοναρχία of the Trinity must be rooted in the Person of the Father in order to preserve freedom in God. See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 33–39. The following chapter of this thesis will examine the differences between Torrance and Zizioulas in full.

¹²³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 127.

¹²⁴ See Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 1241 for lexical information.

¹²⁵ Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology*, 106–107; Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 237.

The penultimate scope is the Nicene ὁμοούσιον¹²⁶ and therein Christ.¹²⁷ Torrance contends that the ὁμοούσιον arises out of rigid examination of Biblical statements following Athanasian scientific theology¹²⁸ and that, in turn, guides how Biblical statements are to be interpreted.¹²⁹ Here, the ὁμοούσιον also works as a hermeneutical statement in that it is the key to interpreting the Scriptures.

In this sense, the Nicene ὁμοούσιον drives Torrance's conception of the objective nature of theology.¹³⁰ In Torrance's estimate, the Fathers solidified the core assertion that theology is scientific and dogmatic and thus objective.¹³¹ For Torrance, because of the essential difference between creation and their Creator, it would be impossible for humankind to know God who is a completely different essence from them without God's initiative. Thus, argues Torrance, Athanasius' famous dictum: "It would be more godly and true to signify God from the Son and call him Father, than to name God from his works alone and call him Unoriginate."¹³² Torrance conceptualizes this as a patristic affirmation of the

¹²⁶ Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology*, 112–113.

¹²⁷ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 32.

¹²⁸ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 129–130.

¹²⁹ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 130 citing Athanasius *De Decretis*, 4. See also *Theology in Reconstruction*, 33.

¹³⁰ Molnar states: "What attracted Torrance to history was his own quest for a scientific theology, which he found in the early fathers..." See Paul Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009). See also Jason Radcliff, "T.F. Torrance's Trinitarian Theology," review of *T.F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* by Paul D. Molnar, *The Expository Times* 122, no. 10 (June 22, 2011): 512–513.

¹³¹ This was a topic of great interest to Torrance and he wanted to write his PhD thesis on the scientific nature of theology but was persuaded otherwise by Barth. To see this more fully unpacked in greater detail in his other work see: Thomas F. Torrance, *Theological Science*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996) and Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2001).

¹³² Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 49 quoting Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, 1.34.

ultimate impossibility of any form of natural theology and, therefore, the necessity of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ.¹³³

Torrance asserts that the theme of theological and epistemological objectivity was put forth in the thought of Athanasius but also Hilary of Poitiers and Irenaeus of Lyons.¹³⁴ For Torrance, Irenaeus and, even more strongly, Hilary affirmed the aspect of Nicene theology that asserted the ultimate objective nature of Christian faith. As Torrance puts it: "Primacy in the Nicene Creed accorded to faith reflects the settled patristic view of faith, not as subjectively grounded but as an objectively grounded persuasion of the mind..."¹³⁵

¹³³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 50–64. He argues that "when we speak of God from the perspective of the Creator/creature relation, or the Unoriginate/originate relation, we can only think and speak of him in vague, general and negative terms, at the infinite distance of the creature from the Creator where we cannot know God as he is *in-himself* or in accordance with his divine nature, but only in his absolute separation from us, as the eternal, unconditioned and indescribable" (p. 50) and "any attempt to reach knowledge of God in this kind of way is self-willed" (p. 51) but "[the scientific approach of Nicaea] in which we know things only under the constraint of their distinctive nature, applies even more forcefully to the knowledge of God, for since there is no likeness between the eternal being of God and the being of created reality, *God may be known only out of himself*" (p. 52, italics not in the original).

¹³⁴ Torrance's reconstruction of scientific theology on the basis of patristic themes is highly insightful. R.L. Wilken comments that Torrance's reading of Hilary of Poitiers is fresh and unique and has much to offer contemporary scholarship. See Robert L. Wilken, Review of *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* by T.F. Torrance, *Theological Studies* 57, no. 4 (December 1, 1996): 744. Indeed, there has not been significant work done on the Fathers' notion of objectivity and Torrance had deep insight into the objective nature of faith in patristic theology, due, no doubt in part, to his connection of the Fathers to Barthian theology. Primarily, however, Torrance's emphasis on the *ὑποούσιον* and the inner meaning behind it regarding God's self-giving in revelation brought out this element in patristic theology and was a fresh insight.

¹³⁵ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 19 quoting Hilary, *De Trin.*, 1.18: "In faith a person takes his stand on the ground of God's own being."

κατὰ φύσιν theology

Connected to Torrance's conception of the objectivity of theology is his use of the patristic theme of κατὰ φύσιν.¹³⁶ Torrance understands this patristic phrase to mean:

Through faith our minds assent to the inherent intelligibility of things, yield to their self-evidencing power, and are adapted to know them in their own nature. It is upon that kind of basic contact with reality that all sure knowledge rests and all genuine understanding is established, and upon it that we continue to rely in all further inquiry and all deepening of our understanding.¹³⁷

Torrance contends that this means objects must be studied according to their own nature. For theologians this applies directly to the object of their study, God. Torrance sees this theme put forth by Irenaeus in his discussion of early creedal and *kerygmatic* proclamations as “assertions of belief that are organized from beyond themselves by their common ground in the apostolic deposit of faith and ultimately by the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ”¹³⁸ and Hilary's view that “God cannot be apprehended except through Himself.”¹³⁹ For Torrance, these Fathers as well as Athanasius explored what it means to view theology as truly scientific and objective in nature.

For Torrance orthodox theological methodology is rooted in this “scientific theology” and “realist epistemology.” Torrance adapts this patristic theme into his own theology through the Torrancian conception of “realist epistemology,” which

¹³⁶ From the Greek “according to nature.” It essentially means “as something really is.”

¹³⁷ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 20.

¹³⁸ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 34.

¹³⁹ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 21.

he acknowledges to be rooted in the Greek Fathers.¹⁴⁰ Torrance calls this method “the pure science of theology,” indeed, dogmatics. Here, Torrance states,

Theologians are engaged in the formulation of dogmatic statements in and through which [they] inquire after *the* dogma, that is, the inherent rationality of the *Logos*, the *Prima Veritas* of God, by letting him disclose Himself to [their] mind, command [their] recognition, and order and shape [their] understanding in basic ways that correspond faithfully to his words and acts.¹⁴¹

For Torrance this is κατὰ φύσιν theology. In Athanasius and the other Fathers, Torrance sees an approach to theology that arose out the Alexandrian scientific-theological method. He states that this entails “rigorous knowledge according to the inherent structure or nature (κατὰ φύσιν) of the realities investigated.”¹⁴² However, in Torrance’s view, Athanasius did not blindly adopt this scientific method but rather reconstructed the method in order to work with a Biblical worldview.¹⁴³

For Torrance the ὁμοούσιον has to do with the Gospel at its *kerygmatic* core and preserves its integrity. In Torrance’s mind a number of issues are at stake here and if the ὁμοούσιον is denied there would be a number of negative implications. Primarily, Torrance holds that without the ὁμοούσιον God’s revelation in Christ is not real revelation from God and therefore “theology” would not be theology but rather “mythology.”¹⁴⁴ Thus, the ὁμοούσιον cuts out any possibility of “thinking” a

¹⁴⁰ Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology*, 103.

¹⁴¹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 55.

¹⁴² Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 241. See also *Atonement*, 236.

¹⁴³ Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 3–4.

¹⁴⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 133–134.

way towards God; this would actually be mythology.¹⁴⁵ This is because it would no longer be rooted in God κατὰ φύσιν. Second, he contends that without the ὁμοούσιον Christ would not be the self-communication of God, which in turn would imply that God does not care to reveal himself.¹⁴⁶ Thus, the ὁμοούσιον ultimately affirms two things: That God is identical to his self-revelation in Jesus Christ and that God is eternally in himself what he is in Christ.¹⁴⁷

For Torrance the only way to know God κατὰ φύσιν is through the Son, and, in turn, the only way this is possible is if the Son is ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ for only through the Son who was ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς (*from the essence/being of the Father*) can God be known. This is because the only way to know God is, in fact, through the Son who is ὁμοούσιον.¹⁴⁸ Thus, the only way to actually do κατὰ φύσιν theology is through Christ because Christ is ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ. This is because of the fact that if God is not really in Jesus, the Gospel would be empty of divine reality and validity.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Torrance sees the Nicene Creed as affirming that God in his own being was present in this world.¹⁵⁰ In support, Torrance liked to quote a dictum of his teacher, H.R. Mackintosh, “the words of Jesus are the words of

¹⁴⁵ Torrance’s discussion of mythology in Athanasius in this section of *Trinitarian Faith* often sounds substantially similar to Barth’s critique of 19th century liberal theology’s approach to God, namely, “humanity writ large” and, indeed, Barth’s approach to dogmatics in general. Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark), I/I; III/I. See the next chapter for a fuller examination of Torrance’s connections to Barth.

¹⁴⁶ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 134.

¹⁴⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 135.

¹⁴⁸ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 2–3 citing Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, 2.76.

¹⁴⁹ Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology*, 14.

¹⁵⁰ Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 1.

God.”¹⁵¹ If the Son is not ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ, theology would not be κατὰ φύσιν and would therefore not be theology at all but rather mythology, which, Torrance notes, was the problem with the Arian system.¹⁵²

Torrance elaborates on this reconstruction and explains that scientific theology means that human terms are to remain dynamic and able to be adapted to the realities that they signify, and in this way, theology is much like physics.¹⁵³ Therefore, patristic theological terminology is, in Torrance’s view, “functional and not analytical language.”¹⁵⁴ This is why, for example, Athanasius could alternate between terms in order to signify the same reality.¹⁵⁵ For, the terms remain open to being re-defined and changed on the basis of the realities they signify. Thus, they are “axiomatic terms.”¹⁵⁶ This means that knowledge of new realities forced new terms to be used and old terms to be reused with different meanings in order to make them appropriate to the realities to which they refer.¹⁵⁷

Herein, Torrance sees Athanasius as having developed “the basic grammar and distinctive pattern (στοικαίωσιν καὶ χαρακτηῖρα) of the faith in accordance with Christ and his divine manifestation towards us.”¹⁵⁸ Torrance elaborates upon the dynamic nature of the axioms elsewhere in reference to the revolution in

¹⁵¹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 14.

¹⁵² Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 119. More on this below.

¹⁵³ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 241.

¹⁵⁴ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 242.

¹⁵⁵ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 128–129.

¹⁵⁶ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 264.

¹⁵⁷ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 20.

¹⁵⁸ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 263 citing Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 56 and referring to *Contra Arionas* 28f.; *De Decretis* 32.

thought produced by Einstein's Relativity Theory, which he sees as similarly significant to Athanasius:

The axioms are not just a set of logical premises, antecedent to and independent of the results, but arise out of the intrinsic connections of scientific activity, and force themselves upon us as the necessary structures of thought through which the intelligible nature of things imposes itself upon our minds.¹⁵⁹

Put otherwise, Torrance holds that the axioms and the scientific-theological results continuously inform one another. The prime example of how this works is Torrance's conception of the Nicene ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί. For, as discussed earlier, the ὁμοούσιον and the Nicene conception of οὐσία arose out of Athanasius' reading of Scripture, but at the same time the ὁμοούσιον also governed Athanasius' reading of Scripture.¹⁶⁰

Another aspect of patristic scientific theology, in Torrance's view, is that the meaning of the words in the Bible are not found nor rooted in themselves, but rather in the realities and actions they express.¹⁶¹ Thus, the words always point away from themselves and to the divine reality they are expressing. This is what Torrance perceives as Athanasius' problem with the Arian method. For the Arians thought κατ' ἐπίνοιαν (*out of themselves/ themselves as a reference point*) whereas Athanasius, thought κατὰ διάνοιαν (*across/away/through from Himself towards*

¹⁵⁹ Torrance, *God and Rationality*, 100. See also 99–103.

¹⁶⁰ Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 230.

¹⁶¹ Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 232. This is also Torrance's view of Scripture. See *Reality & Evangelical Theology*. There is substantial overlap between Torrance and Barth on this subject. For Barth Scripture is a witness and points away from itself to Christ. See Mary Kathleen Cunningham, "Karl Barth" in Justin Holcomb, *Theologies of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 183–202.

God).¹⁶² For Torrance, this is intrinsically connected to κατὰ φύσιν for Athanasian theology was able to properly think and speak of God because it was κατὰ διάνοιαν whereas the Arians could not think of God κατὰ φύσιν because they thought κατ' ἐπίνοιαν and simply projected their own ideas onto God.

Torrance holds that Athanasius insisted upon a dynamic view of theological terms, leaving them open to being shaped by the realities signified. However, according to Torrance, whereas Athanasius kept certain flexibility in terms, the Cappadocians made them more fixed.¹⁶³ This is seen most clearly in Torrance's conception of the Athanasian doctrine of ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί. Torrance holds that Athanasius maintained a dynamic view of οὐσία and ὑπόστασις.¹⁶⁴ Another example is that a dynamic view of terms implied the subject of the event, Christ himself, must inform statements about himself.¹⁶⁵

Apophatic Theology

Flowing from this, Torrance argues for a certain level of *apophatic*¹⁶⁶ reserve when doing theology.¹⁶⁷ In order to clarify this, Torrance distinguishes between “Athanasian *apophaticism*” and “Dionysian *apophaticism*” (named after

¹⁶² Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today*, 52.

¹⁶³ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 245–246. See *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 117–118 for further discussion of the Athanasian view.

¹⁶⁴ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 244–245.

¹⁶⁵ Torrance, *Atonement*, 234.

¹⁶⁶ ἀπόφασις. From the Greek ἀπό φασιν: *From/away from speech*. See Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 219. The term basically asserts the view that any knowledge of God is always limited. However, there are different ways of understanding this.

¹⁶⁷ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 158–159.

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite).¹⁶⁸ Torrance contends that for Athanasius, humans can only know God economically, but the key difference is that the economic God is also the ontological God. Additionally, in Torrance's Athanasian *apophaticism*, God reveals himself fully but not wholly.¹⁶⁹ Conversely for Pseudo-Dionysius *apophaticism* is because of "the infinite excess of God known over our knowing of him."¹⁷⁰ Thus, Torrance wants to preserve that Athanasian sense of *apophatic* reserve for, "precisely in apprehending him [God] we know him to be incomprehensible."¹⁷¹ Torrance wants to stay far from any sort of dualism that calls the connection of God to his self-revelation into question.

Heresy and Mythology

Torrance notes that the Nicene Fathers saw heresy as ἀσέβεια (*impiety/ungodliness*)¹⁷² and usually rooted in some sort of theological or epistemological dualism.¹⁷³ Torrance references Athanasius here as stating that

¹⁶⁸ The 5th/6th century author of the corpus attributed to Paul's convert in Athens. See Acts 17: 34.

¹⁶⁹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 81.

¹⁷⁰ See Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 85 especially footnote 17. See also *Theology in Reconciliation*, 221. The thrust of the argument is that the root of Athanasius' apophaticism was because of his strong distinction between God and creation whereas as the "fatal" version of apophaticism was rooted in cosmological dualism as found in Aristotelian and Stoic logic, and the statement by Basilides that "we cannot know what God is, but only what he is not." Pseudo-Dionysius, John of Damascus, and some modern Orthodox such as Vladimir Lossky took up the latter version. Note that Torrance does not lump all the Orthodox together here; for he sings high praises of Nikolas Nissiotis and his return to Athanasian theology via Karl Barth. See 103–109.

¹⁷¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 85–86.

¹⁷² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 42 citing Athanasius, *De Decretis*, 1-3.

¹⁷³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 111–113; Torrance says that combating the theological and epistemological dualism in which Western thought is embedded was a missionary calling for him. See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Series II, Box 10: Autobiographical Writings of Thomas F. Torrance, Princeton Seminary. See also Jock Stein's introduction to Torrance, *Gospel, Church, and Ministry*, ed. Stein, vi. Stein points to Robert T. Walker's recent PhD thesis where he points to four core elements to Torrance's thought, one of which was the attack on various forms of dualism.

the Nicene Creed is “a bulwark” against them [the dualistic heresies].¹⁷⁴ Thus, the heretics were rooted in ἀσέβεια and did not know God κατὰ φύσιν. Torrance argues that Athanasius rejected Arianism, among other reasons, because of their dualism between God and the world.¹⁷⁵ For, if the Arians were right then only μυθολογία (and not knowledge of God κατὰ φύσιν) would be possible.¹⁷⁶ For Torrance, ἀσέβεια and therein heresy were ultimately rooted in elements of dualism, especially a dualism which separated the αἰσθητός κόσμος (*sensible world*) and νοητός κόσμος (*intelligible world*).¹⁷⁷ Torrance holds that this dualism was rooted in Neo-Platonic dichotomies and even appeared later in John of Damascus and his view that God is οὐσία ὑπερούσιος (*essence beyond essence*).¹⁷⁸ This is a dualism nowhere present in Athanasius, according to Torrance.¹⁷⁹

This sort of theology, in Torrance’s mind, can never be orthodox for true theology could only be done from an objective point in God.¹⁸⁰ Here Torrance understands himself to be significantly reliant upon Hilary, especially concerning

¹⁷⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 113 citing Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* 1.8; 2.12, 14; *De Decretis*, 12, 32; *De Synodis*, 45; *Ad Afros*, 11.

¹⁷⁵ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 224.

¹⁷⁶ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 240.

¹⁷⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 114–115.

¹⁷⁸ Often translated into English as *supra-essence*. The term is from the Greek ὑπέρ (*over/above*) and οὐσία (*being/essence*). See Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 218. Torrance does not cite what text he had in mind from the Damascene. One instance where John of Damascus used this phrase was in *De Fide Orthodoxa*, III.10 in discussion of whether the *Trisagion Hymn* refers solely to Christ or the entire Godhead. He argued that Athanasius, Basil, and Gregory all held that the hymn refers to: the three Persons of the supra-essential Godhead (τὰς τρεῖς τῆς ὑπερουσίου θεότητος ὑπόστασεις). See PG 94.1020–1021. The phrase also appears in Orthodox liturgical texts. See, for example, *Kontakion on the Navity of Christ*: “Today the Virgin gives birth to him who is supra-essential (ὑπερουσίον).” Torrance holds that this term is highly dualist and that dualism had made its way into the Eastern Orthodox liturgy via John Chrysostom. See *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 17.

¹⁷⁹ Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 15.

¹⁸⁰ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 51.

the idea that “everything we actually think and say of God must be constrained and controlled within the bounds of the revelation of the Father in and through the incarnate Son.”¹⁸¹

Creation and Natural Theology

The other side of Torrance’s scientific theology is his reconstruction of “natural theology.” By means of his reconstruction of the Fathers through the ὁμοούσιον Torrance provides fresh insight into patristic theology in the realm of natural science. During his time Torrance was at the forefront of those studying the relationship between science and religion and his contribution concerning the Fathers on relativity theory and natural science was truly immense.

Torrance, relying upon Irenaeus and Hilary, contends that God is absolutely free and his will to create was a free act of philanthropic love for humankind (φιλανθρωπία).¹⁸² God’s freedom was only understood by the Nicene Fathers, according to Torrance, “from the standpoint of God’s incarnate self-revelation in Jesus Christ his beloved Son, the Word through whom all things were made...”¹⁸³ or, put otherwise, from the ὁμοούσιον. Furthermore, the knowledge that God has freely chosen to be in relation with his creation, is again a knowledge only seen through Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 81-82 citing Hilary, *De Trinitate*, 1.13-19.

¹⁸² See Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 1475 for lexical information.

¹⁸³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 91.

¹⁸⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 92-95.

This means that creation came out of nothing and is thus completely contingent.¹⁸⁵ Torrance takes this concept from Athanasius, especially in *Contra Gentes* and *De Incarnatione* and also from John Philoponus and Basil the Great.¹⁸⁶ Basically, it means that creation could not and cannot exist by itself for it is entirely dependent upon God.¹⁸⁷ The contingency of creation means, for Torrance, that it can be studied in itself, though this will not lead to any sort of knowledge of God as he is in himself.¹⁸⁸ Torrance's commentators have hailed Torrance's re-situation of natural theology under the auspices of revelation as a positive development.¹⁸⁹

Christological-Pneumatological view of the church and sacraments

Torrance also approaches his ecclesiology from the point of view of the ὁμοούσιον. Torrance roots his ecclesiology directly in “the internal relation of the Son to the Father” (the ὁμοούσιον)¹⁹⁰ because it was clear “to the catholic fathers that there was a profound interconnection between ecclesiology and Christology as well pneumatology, the key to which, as in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, was the Nicene *homoousion*.”¹⁹¹ Torrance expands this by stating:

¹⁸⁵ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 95–102.

¹⁸⁶ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 98–100.

¹⁸⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 100–101. Torrance refers to Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* and Aristedes, *Ad Autolycus*: “If [God] were to withdraw [his] presence from the creation it would vanish into nothing.” See p. 101. Interestingly this is an idea substantially similar to the one put forth by Jonathan Edwards. See Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*, 4.3.

¹⁸⁸ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 102–104. Hence Torrance's massive amount of scholarship done in the field of natural science and why it can be done. See Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981); Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*; Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976).

¹⁸⁹ See e.g. McGrath's discussion in *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*, 190–192.

¹⁹⁰ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 264.

¹⁹¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 277.

The doctrine of the Church must be expounded in terms of its *internal relations*, and not some external relation, to Jesus Christ, for it is in Christ and his inherent relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit that the essential nature of the Church is to be found.¹⁹²

Torrance understands this conception to have come directly from Athanasius, who had an ecclesiology that was also directly rooted in an understanding of the Church's participation in the Son who is ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ.¹⁹³ Torrance argues that it was only in Western ecclesiology that there began to develop a distinction between the external fellowship of believers in the Church and the Church as the mystical Body of Christ, which Torrance roots in traces of dualistic Origenism.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, Torrance sees a direct correlation between theology, especially Christology and Triadology, and ecclesiology. For example, Torrance sees in Arianism a Christology that only allowed for a moral union between Christ and God and thus Arian ecclesiology was a community of like-minded believers. Contrast this to Torrance's view of Nicene ecclesiology: A real ontological union of believers with Christ and one another.¹⁹⁵

Connected to this is the notion of *kerygma*. For Torrance, Irenaeus of Lyons developed the concept of the apostolic *kerygma*. As Torrance puts it, "for [Irenaeus] the incarnation of the Lord and the message of salvation, fact and meaning, the Word and the word, the Truth and truths, were all intrinsically integrated and might not be torn apart without serious distortion of the faith."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 264.

¹⁹³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 264-265 citing Athanasius, *In Ps.*, 21.22.

¹⁹⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 270.

¹⁹⁵ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 277-278.

¹⁹⁶ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 260.

This means, for Torrance, that salvation and the message about salvation are inseparable. Therefore, because the church is the place wherein God has united humankind to himself in Christ, the church also embodies the *kerygma* and the deposit of faith.¹⁹⁷ Torrance contrasts this Irenaean and “realist” conception of the church, centered on the ὁμοούσιον with Tertullian’s significantly more legalist, dualist, and static conception of the church being bound together by discipline and his rigid conception of the “rule of faith.”¹⁹⁸

For Torrance the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic on the basis laid out above, namely, the ὁμοούσιον and *kerygma*. The church, according to Torrance, is one because Christ is one.¹⁹⁹ The church is holy on the basis of the holiness of the Trinity.²⁰⁰ Finally, the church is catholic and apostolic because of her rootedness in the apostolic mind, faith, and preaching.²⁰¹ Thus, there is one baptism into Christ’s body containing the encapsulation of the apostolic *kerygma*.²⁰²

Torrance contrasts this realist and ὁμοούσιον-centered view of the church with what he sees as dualism in the Roman Catholic and liberal protestant wings of the church. For Torrance, both of these churches had left behind any sort of objective notion of the church by replacing the objectivity of the Holy Spirit as enhypostatic in God with either the human Spirit, as in liberal Protestantism, or

¹⁹⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 261.

¹⁹⁸ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 270–271.

¹⁹⁹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 279–280.

²⁰⁰ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 280–282.

²⁰¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 282–289.

²⁰² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 289–301.

with the church herself, as in Roman Catholicism.²⁰³ The patristic view, as explicated by Athanasius and Irenaeus, was significantly more objectively focused. Torrance appropriates this thinking imaginatively into his own Reformed context in his discussion of the corporate episcopate and sharing in the ministry of Christ primarily by asserting the vicarious priesthood and ministry of Christ and the church's sharing in this ministry.²⁰⁴

Torrance roots his view of the sacraments entirely in the Person of Christ. For him, the vicarious humanity of Christ²⁰⁵ in patristic theology means that Christ was a vicarious priest on behalf of humankind.²⁰⁶ Torrance elaborates upon this further and explicates the vicarious role of the ascended Christ in worship, a view he takes from Athanasius and Cyril.²⁰⁷ Connected to this, Torrance puts forward

²⁰³ Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 471. See also Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 234.

²⁰⁴ See Torrance, *Royal Priesthood*, especially the last chapter and also Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church : Volume 1: Order & Disorder*; Thomas F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church : Volume 2: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1960).

²⁰⁵ See below for more on the vicarious humanity of Christ.

²⁰⁶ See Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 110-111 citing Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, IV:6.

²⁰⁷ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 139-214. See especially 156ff. David Fergusson states: "Torrance's commitment to a strong Christological view of worship and the sacraments determines his doctrine of the ascension." See David F. Fergusson, "The Ascension of Christ: Its Significance in the Theology of T.F. Torrance," *Participatio: The Journal of the T.F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* vol. 3 (2012): 103. Notably, Torrance's eschatology is also rooted in Torrance's Christology. See Stanley S. MacLean's recently published PhD dissertation for an exploration of this aspect of Torrance's eschatology: *Resurrection, Apocalypse, and the Kingdom of Christ: The Eschatology of Thomas F. Torrance* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012). MacLean argues that Torrance's eschatology is "an imaginative attempt at recapturing the eschatological orientation of the early church." See p. xvi. Notably, Torrance connects Athanasius to Calvin in the realm of eschatology. In his discussion about the difference between Eastern and Western eschatology, Torrance propagates that Calvin was basically Athanasian in his eschatology because of the affirmation of a "world-affirming" character, distinct from the Western view that was "world-denying." See Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 155. Torrance references Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 29ff., and Maximus, *Capita Gnostica*, M.P.G. 90, 1108.

the view that the primary sacrament of the church is Jesus Christ himself²⁰⁸ and holds that this means that the sacraments must be understood as participating in the mystery of Christ through the Spirit.²⁰⁹ This means that the act of baptism looks beyond itself to the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, a view rooted in Athanasius.²¹⁰ In his article *The One Baptism Common to Christ and His Church*²¹¹ and various articles in *Conflict and Agreement: Volume 2*²¹² Torrance elaborates upon his Christologically conditioned view of the sacraments of baptism and communion rooting them entirely in the person of Christ, and, in particular, the humanity of Christ which he calls the “matter or substance” of the sacraments.²¹³

Piety, godliness, and asceticism

Torrance understands two words to be inextricably connected to scientific theology and orthodoxy, εὐσέβεια (*piety*) and θεοσέβεια (*godliness*). The dual concepts of piety and godliness, which Torrance feels are core to the Fathers and

²⁰⁸ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 82. Compare this to Barth who holds that Christ is the one true sacrament. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, p. 55. Torrance's view arises, in part, from his "realist" epistemology, as discussed above.

²⁰⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 82.

²¹⁰ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 83–89. Cf. Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, 1.47: “For when the Lord, as man, was washed in Jordan, it was we who were washed in Him and by Him. And when He received the Spirit, it was we who by Him were made recipients of It.”

²¹¹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 83–105.

²¹² Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement: Volume 2*. See especially 93–202.

²¹³ See e.g. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement: Volume 2*, 142. Torrance sees himself as following Calvin in this emphasis who, according to Torrance, followed the patristic tradition. Torrance sees the evangelical Scottish tradition adhering to this approach as well. See e.g. Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 40 for his discussion of John Knox's similarity to the liturgies of St Mark and St James. Torrance's high view of the sacraments is further notable as part of the return to the patristic tradition explored in the previous chapter. Chapter one argued that many Protestant evangelicals are attracted to the rich sacramental life of the patristic tradition which they find in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Torrance is also attracted to this high view of the sacraments but he finds it in his own Reformed tradition.

the ὁμοούσιον, are central to his notion of the *Consensus Patrum* and play a major role in Torrance's creative reconstruction of the Fathers. Essentially, he understands this theme to be concerned with living a life in accordance with the nature of God. The scientific nature of theology has to do with the epistemological side of this. Piety and godliness have to do with what might be labeled the spiritual, physical, and even ascetical side of knowing God in accordance with who he is in himself. Torrance's approach to asceticism has set the stage for further Reformed and evangelical explorations of this important Greek patristic theme.²¹⁴

Torrance feels that Origen excellently captured the patristic connection of piety and real theology.²¹⁵ For Torrance, Origen combined the careful scientific investigation asserted by Irenaeus and Hilary with spiritual training.²¹⁶ Put otherwise, this is "asceticism" or, in Torrance's words, "ascetic theology." As he puts it:

To know God and to be holy, to know God and worship, to know God and to be cleaned in mind and soul from anything that may come between people and God, to know God and be committed to him in consecration, love and obedience, go inseparably together.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ See Jason Radcliff, "A Reformed Asceticism," *Theology in Scotland*, Vol. 20 No. 1 (2013) for one such attempt in the Scottish Reformed context.

²¹⁵ Though one wonders what Torrance thought of the story of Origen's certain extremity in ascetical zeal. Eusebius of Caesarea, the ancient Christian historian and also great admirer of Origen, preserved the account that Origen castrated himself, taking the words of Christ "absurdly literal" concerning some becoming eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.8 referring to Matthew 19:12.

²¹⁶ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 36; 41.

²¹⁷ Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1992), 26. This is a common theme among the Fathers as can be seen in the plethora of monastic texts, especially those of the desert Fathers. Torrance surely had these in mind as well the ascetic theology of Athanasius in *De Incarnatione*, 57: "But for the searching of the Scriptures and true knowledge (γνώσιν ἀληθῆ)

Torrance contends that, according to Origen (as well as Clement, and Athanasius) only through a leaping forward of the awakened mind could truth be known, a leaping forward gained by corporate pious living (κατ'εὐσέβειαν).²¹⁸ For Torrance, the ascetical and godly aspect of theology is the most important. Indeed, the “transformation and reconciliation of the mind” as he puts it is more important than academic theological knowledge.²¹⁹ For Torrance this is a transformation to the “mind of Christ,”²²⁰ and is a lifelong process, the result being a keen “theological instinct.”²²¹

For Torrance, asceticism and all aspects of sanctification are rooted in Christ.²²² The way in which the mind of humans is restructured to the reality of God is by participation in the mind of Christ, which occurs by means of Christ's vicarious intercession as High Priest on the one hand and human participation in this by prayer and Bible reading on the other hand. This is done, according to Torrance, by “incessant prayer in offering [oneself] daily to God through the

a honorable life (βίου καλοῦ), a clean soul (ψυχῆς καθαρᾶς), and virtue according to Christ (τῆς κατὰ χριστὸν ἀρετῆς) are necessary...for without a clean mind (καθαρᾶς διανοίας) and an imitation of the life of the saints (τῆς πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους τοῦ βίου μιμήσεως), one would not be able to comprehend (καταλαβεῖν) the words of the saints.” See PG 25b.196–197 for the full text.

Asceticism is a term not often used in Protestant circles but absolutely central to Eastern Orthodoxy. It is best captured by the classic compilation of Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and Makarios of Corinth, *The Philokalia*. An English translation exists: G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, trans., *The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Markarios of Corinth*, 4 vols. (London: Faber & Faber, 1983).

²¹⁸ Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 84. See also *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 74.

²¹⁹ See Torrance, *Atonement*, 437–447.

²²⁰ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 127.

²²¹ Torrance, *Atonement*, 437–447.

²²² See Alexandra Radcliff, “Sanctification: Words for the Weary,” *Theology in Scotland*, Vol. 20 No. 2 (forthcoming autumn 2013) for a constructive examination of the Torrance brothers on this subject. She argues that, with the Torrance brothers, sanctification must be objectively rooted in Christ; otherwise it becomes a work and Christians are forced to attempt to “sanctify themselves.” Christians can rather rest in God for their sanctification and no longer be weary.

reconciling and atoning mediation of Christ.”²²³ This is a predominant theme in Torrance’s imaginative reconstruction of patristic theology and was garnered from the Fathers, especially the thought of Cyril of Alexandria. The main impetus of Cyril’s argument concerning the continuing intercession of Christ as found in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* and *De Adoratione* as Torrance sees it is that as Christ intercedes for humankind they are continually conformed to his own mind. Torrance contends that Cyril put forth the view humankind is sanctified “as [they] are enabled to share with [Christ’s] mind” and “[their] human mind which has been sanctified and healed in him, that [they] may be associated with him in his priestly presentation of himself and of [them] through himself to the Father.”²²⁴ Torrance contends that according to Cyril it is only by means of this *noetic* union that humankind is presented to the Father in Christ; a union already complete by means of Christ’s incarnate work but applied to humankind by means of their participation in it.²²⁵ This union, Torrance argues, was for Cyril the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in humankind:

It is then in pneumatological terms that Cyril understands the intimate union between us and Christ: the presence of the Mind of the Christ in us and his offering of our mind to the Father, for the Spirit, he reminds us, is the Mind of Christ, and it is in the same Spirit that our mind is sanctified and lifted up through Christ into God.²²⁶

²²³ Torrance, *Atonement*, 446.

²²⁴ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 180.

²²⁵ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 180–181.

²²⁶ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 182.

This is because the Spirit is the only bond of connection between humankind and God.²²⁷ Then, by means of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God, humankind is brought into *noetic* (νοητός)²²⁸ and herein personal union with Christ and therein God *in se*. This discussion of the possibility of knowledge of God only through and by God is of course central to Reformed theology²²⁹ and emphasized by Torrance's beloved teachers Karl Barth and H.R. Mackintosh.²³⁰

As Christ intercedes for humankind and humankind participates in this worship the Church is continually sanctified and renewed. As Torrance puts it: "That is why [people] cannot be theologians without incessant prayer in offering [themselves] daily to God through the reconciling and atoning mediation of Christ."²³¹ For "through study of the holy scriptures, through meditation and prayer [theologians] tune into the mind of God incarnate in Jesus Christ, the source of all rationality until [their] own minds, healed, renewed, and sanctified in him, are instinct with his truth."²³² Thus it is through prayer and corporate worship that Christians are united more and more to Christ.²³³ This is on account of the vicarious humanity of Christ, which will be explored in full below.

²²⁷ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 183.

²²⁸ Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 917: "Intelligible, falling within the sphere of νοῦς, apprehended by the intellect."

²²⁹ See e.g. Calvin, *Institutes*, I, particularly, I.7.5.

²³⁰ e.g. Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963), 15–26. See Mackintosh, *The Divine Initiative*, 39–70.

²³¹ Torrance, *Atonement*, 446.

²³² Torrance, *Atonement*, 447.

²³³ It should be noted that Torrance's conception of asceticism, while rooted in the Fathers, is significantly different from others also reliant upon the patristic witness. Contemporary Orthodox views of soteriology and sanctification, while certainly assuming much from the earlier Fathers, focused more substantially upon the later ascetical tradition as found in the Byzantine tradition, especially Maximus the Confessor and Gregory Palamas. For example, Isaac the Syrian emphasizes

The vicarious humanity of Christ

As discussed, Torrance holds that only God can save; however only God as a human.²³⁴ Thus, the ὁμοούσιον has to be preserved on both the human and divine sides. The theme of the vicarious humanity is perhaps Torrance's greatest contribution to patristic and theological scholarship. This theme arises directly from his imaginative reconstruction of the Fathers on the basis of the ὁμοούσιον. Owing to the fact that Christ is ὁμοούσιον with God and with humankind Christ's work was truly vicarious and eternally saving. This is a major reformulation of the Reformed doctrine of election and, more deeply, *sola fide* (salvation by faith alone) and *sola gratia* (salvation by grace alone).²³⁵ Torrance pushes for a Christologically-rooted doctrine of election in departure from Federal theology's decree-rooted version which propagates "double predestination."²³⁶ In Torrance's

the three stages of prayer: Penitence, purification, and perfection. See Makarios, *Early Fathers from the Philokalia: Together with Some Writings of St. Abba Dorotheus, St. Isaac of Syria, and St. Gregory Palamas*, E. Kadloubovkys and G.E.H. Palmer, trans. and eds., (London: Faber and Faber, 1954); Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 204. Also, the ultimate end of the Christian life as stated by a later Russian ascetic Seraphim of Sarov is the "attainment of the Holy Spirit." See N. Serafim and Holy Trinity Monastery, *A Conversation of Saint Seraphim of Sarov with N.A. Motovilov: a Wonderful Revelation to the World*. (Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1962); Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 196–197. Ultimately, the focus of this stream is on the final stage of this ladder of spiritual development towards God: *Hesychasm* or perfect silence and union with God. See Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 207–209. As such these figures typically root spiritual practices and, ultimately, *theosis* subjectively in (a subjective version of) sanctification rather than objectively in Christ's redemption work and an objective version of sanctification rooted in Christ. Gregory Palamas discusses this perfect union of God in great detail in his defense of the *hesychastic* tradition on Mt. Athos. He argues that in prayer it is possible and indeed the goal to have a *noetic* vision of God's uncreated light. See Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 215–216. See below for elaboration on this point.

²³⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 149–150. See also Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 159.

²³⁵ Torrance argues that the centrality of the vicarious humanity of Christ was captured by the Reformer John Calvin. See Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 45.

²³⁶ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 3. See Torrance, Introduction to *The School of Faith*. See further his brother: James B. Torrance, "Strengths and Weaknesses of Westminster Theology," in Alasdair I.C. Heron, ed., *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1982), 45–53 for J.B. Torrance's critique of Westminster theology. He is particularly critical of the

combination of Greek patristic and Reformed theology Torrance creatively restates the patristic notion of the humanity of Christ and the Reformed notion of election, dynamically combining the two concepts into one: The vicarious humanity.

In order to connect the person and work of Christ, a major theme in Torrance's greater theology, relying upon Irenaeus of Lyons, Torrance contends it is essential to assert that in Christ the whole human person was healed, saved, and sanctified. As Torrance states in his lectures:

It was that Jesus had taken what Irenaeus spoke of as our leprous humanity upon himself, but that instead of becoming a leper himself, he healed and transformed our 'leprous' human nature and restored it to be like the flesh of a newborn child.²³⁷

Torrance sees Irenaeus putting forth the view that the entirety of Christ's life was saving and sanctifying. This was a life culminating in the cross. For Torrance this means that the entire life of Christ was saving and within this he saw in classical theology an intricate connection of the person and the work of Christ. This means that Christ's work on the cross and throughout his whole life was internal to his person.²³⁸ Irenaeus himself states:

[Christ] therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child for children, thus sanctifying those who are of this age...a youth for youths...and thus sanctifying them for the Lord.²³⁹

place accorded to God's decrees. See also Torrance's friend and fellow founding editor of the *Scottish Journal of Theology* J.K.S. Reid's critique of the Calvinist tradition's rooting of election in God's eternal decrees rather than in Christ: J. K. S. Reid, "The Office of Christ in Predestination," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 1, no. 01 (1948): 5–19.

²³⁷ Torrance, *Atonement*, 441.

²³⁸ See Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 461–482.

²³⁹ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, 2.22.

All of this means that salvation must be understood to have occurred within the person of Christ.

Torrance sees a focus on the unity of incarnation and atonement in the Fathers. Any separation of this, argues Torrance, separates the person and work of Christ, which is entirely against the *ὁμοούσιον*. Indeed, Torrance sees atonement falling within the life, especially the person, of the mediator.²⁴⁰ The overarching implication of this is that salvation must be understood to have occurred within the person of Christ. Torrance sees this assertion explicated in Athanasius, Cyril, and Leontius of Byzantium, among others, by means of the patristic doctrine of the hypostatic union.²⁴¹

The key aspect to Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Christ consists of his use of the patristic terms "anhypostasis" and "enhypostasis," meaning the assumption of common humanity by one specific divine Person.²⁴² This is a patristic concept²⁴³ attributed to Leontius of Byzantium²⁴⁴ and also Epiphanius and Didymus in another sense, as discussed earlier, and finally adopted and used by the Reformers.²⁴⁵ The terms preserve the belief that the human nature

²⁴⁰ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 155–158; Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 64–65.

²⁴¹ By applying this Christological concept directly to Soteriology Torrance is using it very imaginatively. See his dogmatics lectures, e.g. Torrance, *Incarnation*, 85. Similar to Torrance, John Meyendorff sees a strong connection between the Christological doctrine of the hypostatic union in Christ and the soteriological doctrine of *theosis*. See Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 163–164.

²⁴² Torrance, *Incarnation*, 85.

²⁴³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 131.

²⁴⁴ Torrance, *Theological Science*, 217ff, 269; Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 51; Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 144, 160.

²⁴⁵ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 197, for example. Torrance sees these as brought together by the Scottish theologian Robert Boyd. See also Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 70–71.

of Christ had no person other than the person of the divine Word. For Torrance this doctrine can be traced back to Cyril of Alexandria in *Contra Theodoretum*.²⁴⁶ Additionally, Cyril developed this theology contra Nestorianism surrounding the Council of Ephesus in 431 C.E. Torrance argues that both Severus of Antioch and John of Damascus developed the doctrine further.²⁴⁷ For him, the doctrine of anhypostasis affirms the notion that the humanity taken by Christ is the common humanity of mankind, for it had no human hypostasis of its own. Rather, Christ's humanity is enhypostasized in the Logos. Therefore, he argues, the flesh of Christ is in fact God's election of humankind for a relationship with God,²⁴⁸ meaning that it was an act from the side of God on behalf of all humankind. For Torrance this means that humanity is personalized and humanized in the person of Christ.²⁴⁹ Torrance sees these dual doctrines as ruling out both the Apollinarian and Monophysite heresies.²⁵⁰ Finally, in Torrance's estimate this doctrine was brought to fruition in the thought of Leontius of Byzantium and the theology of the fourth, fifth, and sixth ecumenical councils in 451 C.E., 553 C.E. and 681 C.E., respectively.

Key to Torrance's understanding of the vicarious humanity is his conception that the Lord came *as* man not *in* man. This is a concept Torrance found in

²⁴⁶ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 84; Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 160 citing *Apologia contra Theodoretum*, PG, 76, 397C and *Thesaurus de Trinitate*, PG 75, 8, 101D–104B.

²⁴⁷ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 160 citing Severus of Antioch, *Collected Letters*, tr. E.W. Brooks, *Patrologia Orientalis*, 1, 14 (Paris 1919–20, pp. 186–194 and Iain R. Torrance, *Christology After Chalcedon* (Norwich, 1988) pp. 114–116 & 125f. as well as John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, 3.3–9.

²⁴⁸ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 146.

²⁴⁹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 160–161.

²⁵⁰ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 160.

Athanasius.²⁵¹ Torrance contends that for the Fathers this included the reality that in the incarnation the Son of God assumed the whole man. Key to Torrance's theology is the view that in becoming man, Christ took humanity and converted it back to God. For Torrance this entails two elements: (1) The assumption of the whole man and subsequently (2) the assumption of fallen humanity.

Torrance sees in the Fathers, especially Athanasius, the assertion that Christ assumed the whole man.²⁵² He sees this as being put forth primarily by Athanasius in texts such as *Ad Epictetus* and *De Incarnatione*. Torrance contends that this was the impetus of Athanasius' entire doctrine of the humanity of Christ. Thus, Torrance feels strongly that for Athanasius Christ's humanity was not merely instrumental but rather that his doctrine of the incarnation must be understood as a real "becoming" on the part of God; God coming "as" man.²⁵³ He sees Athanasius articulating Christ's assumption of "the whole man" vicariously, for the sake of mankind.²⁵⁴ As Torrance sees it, this was one of the central aspects of Athanasius in *Contra Arianos*²⁵⁵ thus extricating the Greek Fathers (especially Athanasius and Cyril and those following them) from the accusation that they were semi-

²⁵¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 149ff. See also *Theology in Reconciliation*, 227ff.

²⁵² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 151–152.

²⁵³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 150–152 citing Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 2.30; 3.31, 35, 53 as well as *Contra Apollinarem*, 1.2, 15; *Contra Arianos*, 1.41, 45; 2.35, 52, 71; 3.2ff, 31ff, 35, 37ff, 40, 43ff, 48, 51ff, 57ff, 63; 4.6ff; Gregory Nazianzen, *Epistle 102*; Cyril of Alexandria, *Epistle ad Nestorius*, MPG 77.3, 116BC; *Adversus Nestorius*, MPG 76.1, 17B; 20D; 21 AB; 28C; 35A; *Quod unus sit Christus*, MPG 75, 1257A; 1272B; 1277C.

²⁵⁴ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 228.

²⁵⁵ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 228ff.

Apollinarian,²⁵⁶ an accusation put forward by, for example in R.P.C. Hanson²⁵⁷ and J.N.D. Kelly.²⁵⁸ Torrance did not adhere to the distinction between Alexandrian and Antiochene theology nor did he see Athanasius as a semi-Apollinarian. He argues that “to omit such a major ingredient in Athanasius’ doctrine of Christ is seriously to distort it and to import into it false problems for which false solutions are then sought.”²⁵⁹ Torrance did much to recover this key aspect of Athanasius’ thought and his former student George Dragas successfully continued this battle in his scholarship on Athanasius.²⁶⁰ In fact, contemporary patristic scholarship no longer assumes the *Logos-Sarx/Logos-Anthropos* framework used for so long and Torrance’s role in this cannot be overstated.²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ The traditional view of Torrance’s time was that of Alois Grillmeier who argues Athanasius was semi-Apollinarian because he did not believe there was a human soul in Christ. See Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 193–219. Connected to this, Grillmeier distinguishes between the *Logos-Sarx* Christology of the Alexandrians and the *Logos-Anthropos* Christology of the Antiochenes, See p. 175ff. Grillmeier places Athanasius on the *Logos-Sarx* side and thus with an “instrumental” view of the human nature of Christ. See p. 205. See also Rankin, “Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T.F. Torrance,” 162; Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 351–353.

²⁵⁷ Hanson understands Athanasius to have been a semi-Apollinarian holding to a “space-suit” Christology. See Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 448–453.

²⁵⁸ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 280f, 284ff.

²⁵⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 229.

²⁶⁰ See Dragas’ monumental PhD thesis which, by a comprehensive comparison of the language in *Contra Apollinarem* and accepted Athanasian texts, argues that the former text is without a doubt Athanasian in authorship. See George Dragas, “St. Athanasius Contra Apollinarem” (PhD Thesis, University of Durham, 1985). See also Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria: Original Research and New Perspectives*, 1–24 for a much shorter summary of some of his key discoveries, highlighting the linguistic arguments. Notably, Torrance wrote a glowing introduction to Dragas’ thesis.

²⁶¹ Statements from Athanasius such as “the savior having in very truth become man, the salvation of the whole man was brought about... the whole man, body and soul alike, has truly obtained salvation in the Word himself” (*Ad Epictetus* 7, PG 26.1061) are now better understood. Torrance’s work here also makes better sense of Cyril. For Cyril, the term “flesh” designated the whole man, as can be seen, for example, in his exposition of Deuteronomy 10:22: “seventy-five souls out of Egypt,” namely, that it meant the whole person, not just the soul. Therefore, Cyril could state that the Word made flesh meant the whole human being, including the soul. See e.g. Cyril of Alexandria, *Scholia* 25; *Festal Letter* 8.5.

For Torrance the assumption of the whole man means that Christ assumed the human mind and turned it back to God. Torrance saw this doctrine explicated clearly in Cyril of Alexandria, as well as by Athanasius and Gregory Nazianzen contra the Apollinarians. This is key for Torrance because without the assumption of the human mind, only man's bodily existence could be saved. However, the "directive principle," namely the human mind, was what most needed to be saved.²⁶² For, without a human mind Christ's atoning work could no longer be truly vicarious.²⁶³ The view that Christ assumed the whole man, including and especially the human mind, was basic to the theology of Athanasius who asserted that Christ took humanity and redeemed, sanctified, and renewed it within his own person.²⁶⁴ This is a theological assertion Torrance sees put forth even more clearly by Gregory Nazianzen and Basil of Caesarea.²⁶⁵

When Torrance looks back to the 4th century and the outbreak of the Apollinarian heresy, which denied a human mind in Christ, he sees Gregory Nazianzen as preserving the fact that Christ assumed the whole fallen²⁶⁶ man,²⁶⁷

²⁶² Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 112.

²⁶³ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 112–113; 150–151.

²⁶⁴ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 153.

²⁶⁵ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 154.

²⁶⁶ Torrance does not appear to explicitly distinguish in a definitive manner between "fallen humanity" and "sinful humanity" in the theology of the Greek Fathers. This distinction appears to have been in the background of his discussion, (i.e. he seems to have held that Christ assumed fallen humanity while remaining sinless) but he does not explicitly set these two elements apart. In his discussion of the Greek Fathers on the notion of Christ's assumption of fallen humanity, Noble provides elaboration upon Torrance's view (though, not in reference to Torrance) and argues that the Greek Fathers indeed distinguished between "fallenness" and "sinfulness" and held that Christ assumed "fallen" humanity yet remained "sinless." See T.A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People: The Theology of Christian Perfecting* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 166–168.

body and mind.²⁶⁸ Without this assertion, the full redemption of humankind cannot be preserved. Here, Torrance holds that Athanasius, as well as many other classical patristic authors, asserted that in the incarnation the *Word* (λόγος) assumed fallen humanity.²⁶⁹ Torrance was fond of Gregory Nazianzen's dictum, "the un-assumed (ἀπρόσληπτον) is the unhealed (ἀθεράπευτον)."²⁷⁰ In Torrance's view it is absolutely necessary to affirm that Christ assumed fallen humanity in all its guilt and corruption,²⁷¹ for to assert otherwise would call into question the salvation of humankind, especially the transformation of the human mind and its redirection towards God.²⁷² This means that, in Jesus, man finally knows God. Torrance asserts that the Fathers believed that Christ assumed fallen humanity in all its guilt; diseased in mind and soul²⁷³ and transformed the human mind.²⁷⁴ This is a development in Torrance's thought for in his early lectures Torrance holds that Christ did not possess a fallen will.²⁷⁵

²⁶⁷ In *Trinitarian Faith* Torrance does not make much of Christ's assumption of fallen humanity. However, elsewhere this is central to his theology and his reading of the Fathers. See Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 153–154 where he discusses the *kenotic* aspect of the incarnation (from κένωσις). See also pp. 161–168.

²⁶⁸ Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 39–40; *The Christian Frame of Mind*, 6–9.

²⁶⁹ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 61–65. See also 200–201.

²⁷⁰ Gregory Nazianzen, *Letter 101: To Cledonius the Priest*. PG 37.181.

²⁷¹ Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 39.

²⁷² Torrance, *Atonement*, 437–447; 139–214; Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 78.

²⁷³ Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 39.

²⁷⁴ Torrance, *Atonement*, 437–447.

²⁷⁵ Gerrit Dawson, *An Introduction to Torrance Theology: Discovering the Incarnate Saviour* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 55–74; Thomas Torrance, *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ*, Reprint (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 122–123; Matthew Baker, "The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance," *Participatio: The Journal of the T.F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* vol. 2 (2010): 23–24.

The atonement

Intricately connected to the vicarious humanity in the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* is the atonement. Torrance distinguishes between the Latin and Greek views of the atonement. For Torrance the ὁμοούσιον upholds the ontological aspect of the atonement, which is key for him.²⁷⁶ Torrance points out that this is why the Western Fathers often split the ontological and forensic elements of the atonement, whereas the Eastern Fathers did not.²⁷⁷ At this point Torrance refers to the patristic doctrine of θέωσις/θεοποίησις (*theosis*)²⁷⁸ which he understands to be a way of expressing “this consubstantial self-giving of God to mankind through Christ and in his Spirit.”²⁷⁹ Torrance appropriates the Greek patristic notion of θέωσις and reconstructs it into a truly Reformed version of this classic patristic doctrine. As such Torrance departs from the typical Western (Roman Catholic and Reformed evangelical) emphasis on the forensic/juridical elements of the atonement.²⁸⁰

Torrance sees Athanasius as putting forth a view concerning the mediation of Christ consisting of Christ mediating the things of God to man and the things of

²⁷⁶ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 160–161.

²⁷⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 161. See also “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy” for a fuller version of this critique

²⁷⁸ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 139–145; 188–190.

²⁷⁹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 139. See also Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 217. Torrance uses the term “deification” but does not like the implications it contains. Elsewhere he prefers “theosis” and even “mediation.” See *Trinitarian Faith*, 188ff and *The Mediation of Christ*, 71. See also Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009). Though, Habets’ net is cast fairly wide regarding what Torrancian themes he considers to be contained under the umbrella of *theosis*.

²⁸⁰ See Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy.”

man to God.²⁸¹ For Torrance this includes the intercessory role Christ played as priest as well as his role in θέωσις. In Torrance's estimate, θέωσις must not be understood as an impersonal absorption into the divine nature. The contrary is in fact the case. For him, θέωσις necessarily needs to be viewed as occurring within the person of Christ. He argues that θέωσις occurred first to the humanity of Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and is applied to humanity.²⁸² Therefore, it is for him a very personal relationship.²⁸³ Accordingly, Torrance views θέωσις as the obverse of the incarnation and sees this as occurring with the help of the Spirit, thus being intensely personal. He sees this explicated in patristic figures such as Irenaeus and Athanasius.²⁸⁴ In Irenaeus Torrance sees θέωσις in the saint's discussion of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within humanity.²⁸⁵ It is in Athanasius, however, that Torrance sees this soteriological perspective discussed most fully. Torrance contends that for Athanasius θέωσις occurred within the person of Christ, to the humanity of Christ, and therefore to the common humanity of all.²⁸⁶ Thus, this is a very personal act of God in Christ.²⁸⁷

Torrance contends that because of both the ὁμοούσιον and the vicarious humanity, it is impossible to think of the atonement other than having taken place

²⁸¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 149; Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 73; Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 144.

²⁸² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 189–190 citing Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* 1.46 f.

²⁸³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 188ff.

²⁸⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 189; Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 71.

²⁸⁵ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 189–190.

²⁸⁶ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 138.

²⁸⁷ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 228–231.

in the person of Christ, and thus in the being and life of God himself.²⁸⁸

Furthermore, because of this, salvation is necessarily universal in range.²⁸⁹ Here Torrance sees in Athanasius a wonderful connection between the personal and ontological aspects of the atonement.²⁹⁰ Herein, he sees the atonement to have been a “wonderful exchange”²⁹¹ that is boundless and for all without qualification²⁹² wherein God remained impassible²⁹³ and humankind is united to God in *θέωσις*.²⁹⁴ This is then applied to individual humans by means of the Holy Spirit.

Torrance holds that if salvation is not viewed in such terms it becomes an external juridical/forensic exchange, a divergence which he calls the “Latin Heresy.”²⁹⁵ Torrance believes that the traditional Greek patristic doctrine of atonement preserved the fact that the atonement, though having external aspects, was something which occurred internally to the life of the incarnate Son and therefore moved back through the *ὁμοούσιον* to the very being of God. Without this the atonement does not have reference to who God is in his own being. Thus, for Torrance, Christ went through each part of human life sanctifying it.²⁹⁶ This means that the humanity of Christ has soteriological significance itself because of

²⁸⁸ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 155.

²⁸⁹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 155. Torrance sees a notion of the limited atonement to imply elements of Nestorianism dividing God from Christ and God’s being from God’s acts. See Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 19.

²⁹⁰ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 157.

²⁹¹ ἀνταλλαγή: See Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 179ff.

²⁹² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 181.

²⁹³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 184–188.

²⁹⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 188–190.

²⁹⁵ Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 40–41; Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” 461–482.

²⁹⁶ Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 41.

the hypostatic union²⁹⁷ and that Christ died for all on the cross for Christ took the humanity of all upon himself.²⁹⁸

The view that salvation must be viewed in personal/ontological terms as opposed to external/forensic terms is a typical Torrance theme and he devotes much time to it in his dogmatics lectures.²⁹⁹ However, his use of this theme in *Trinitarian Faith* and elsewhere when his *Consensus Patrum* is more explicitly present has some nuances inasmuch his use of the patristic concept of *θέωσις* has to do directly with the Fathers whereas in his lectures, for example, the discussion is less explicitly patristic.

Torrance's views on *θέωσις* developed significantly. The dominant view during Torrance's time was that of Harnack, that the Greek Fathers' soteriology was entirely focused on absorption into God and therefore the end of corruption and death. Harnack saw this as "Hellenistic."³⁰⁰ Initially Torrance as well adhered to this view as can be seen in a brief discussion of Athanasius in his thesis written under Karl Barth in the 1950s: *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers*, one of Torrance's earliest works.³⁰¹ In a footnote discussing the doctrine of *θέωσις* in the early Fathers such as Irenaeus and Athanasius, Torrance states "nothing could be

²⁹⁷ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 198. See also *Incarnation*, 210

²⁹⁸ Torrance, *Atonement*, 125–129.

²⁹⁹ See Torrance, *Atonement*, 97–114. Torrance's view, though very much patristic, contains elements of John McLeod Campbell's insistence on the "filial" aspect of the atonement over the "forensic/judicial" aspect. See John McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement*, Revision Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 151–191.

³⁰⁰ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 5.22.

³⁰¹ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

Hellenistic,”³⁰² taking the traditional view following Harnack. Though Torrance initially had trouble with the patristic doctrine of *θέωσις*, eventually he came to view the doctrine not as Hellenistic but as orthodox, standing alongside Georges Florovsky and his view of “Christian Hellenism.”³⁰³ By the 1970s, Torrance viewed *θέωσις* as the “epistemological relevance of the Holy Spirit.”³⁰⁴ Throughout the *Trinitarian Faith*, published in the 1980s, Torrance calls *θέωσις* a Christological and Pneumatological doctrine of great import and, as argued, Torrance sees *θέωσις* happening within the person of Christ thus connecting his person and work and recovering the patristic doctrine from the accusations of impersonal absorption into God. Torrance’s focus on the connection between person and work enables Torrance to depart from the traditional Western tendency towards a dualistic theory of the atonement.

In his reformulation of *θέωσις* Torrance departs from the traditional Eastern Orthodox view as preserved by Lossky and reconstructs the Greek patristic doctrine into a Reformed evangelical version. Lossky, relying upon Gregory Palamas, asserts that in *θέωσις* humankind is united to God’s energy (*ἐνέργεια*) but not God’s essence (*οὐσία*).³⁰⁵ Additionally, for Lossky *θέωσις* is rooted in sanctification and, as explored earlier in this chapter, is the outcome of a life of perfect prayer. For Torrance, to separate God’s *ἐνέργεια* from God’s *οὐσία* cuts away the possibility of real union with God in Christ and herein God’s full presence

³⁰² Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers*, 140.

³⁰³ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 96.

³⁰⁴ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 248.

³⁰⁵ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 213.

in Christ, thus denying the ὁμοούσιον. With this insight Torrance recenters θέωσις upon the humanity of Christ and emphasizes the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.³⁰⁶ As such, Torrance departs from Lossky and neopalamism.³⁰⁷

Torrance locates θέωσις in his doctrine of Christ and the atonement rather than in sanctification.³⁰⁸ Habets brings out this centeredness of θέωσις in Torrance in his book. He argues throughout that Torrance's doctrine of θέωσις "illuminates his incarnational view of the atonement."³⁰⁹ Torrance is critical of views of θέωσις along the lines of Lossky which consider it to entail some sort of impersonal absorption into the divine nature³¹⁰ and of any separation of God's essence God's energies which is inherent to the Losskian version of θέωσις.³¹¹ In order to avoid any sort of subjectivism or division of God's being from God's acts, Torrance roots the doctrine of θέωσις in the person and, more particularly, the humanity of Christ. This gives θέωσις an objective centeredness in Christ, and therein God and, indeed, the ὁμοούσιον, the center of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum*. This is, in many ways, a departure from the traditional reading of Athanasius and the Greek Fathers on θέωσις. Typically the Greek Fathers are considered to have held to an entirely metaphysical conception of redemption while the West was more focused upon the

³⁰⁶ See Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 188–190.

³⁰⁷ See the following chapter for expansion of this point.

³⁰⁸ See his discussion of it in *Trinitarian Faith* 188–190. It is the "third form of atoning exchange" which he discusses.

³⁰⁹ Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance*, 1. See throughout the rest of the book, however.

³¹⁰ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 95–96.

³¹¹ See Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 187.

forensic and faith based aspect.³¹² Yet Torrance's rooting of *θέωσις* in atonement (thus departing from the Losskian reading) portrays the Greek approach to redemption and justification less in metaphysical categories and more in personal categories. It is, as such, very much a Reformed approach and reconstruction of this classical Greek patristic doctrine.

The emphasis upon union with Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is central to Reformed theology and John Calvin in particular.³¹³ Reformed theologians, often directly influenced by Torrance, are not only recovering the theme of union with Christ but the doctrine of *θέωσις*. While this is still very fresh in Reformed theology and theologians debate which elements of *θέωσις* are compatible with Reformed theology and which are not, many are recovering this doctrine into the Reformed tradition following the Reformed evangelical reading offered by Torrance discussing what is now being labelled a "Reformed doctrine of *theosis*."³¹⁴

³¹² See e.g. James Denney, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917), 37–44. He says that Athanasius' view was "metaphysical rather than moral" because it was entirely in "physical categories" and thus sin and reconciliation have nothing to do with it. See p. 37 and p. 42, respectively.

³¹³ See e.g. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.23. Though hyper-Calvinism often emphasizes the juridical/forensic elements of the atonement as found in Calvin, recent scholarship on Calvin has been arguing that union with Christ is absolutely central to Calvin's theory of the atonement. See e.g. Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). Accordingly, Reformed theology has been following suit and emphasizing union with Christ as central to Reformed thought. See e.g. J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

³¹⁴ See Gannon Murphy, "Reformed *Theosis*?" *Theology Today* vol. 65 (July 2008) 191–212 and Myk Habets, "'Reformed *Theosis*?': A Response to Gannon Murphy," *Theology Today* vol. 65 (January 2009) 489–498. Whereas Murphy calls for a recovery of *theosis* including the Eastern Orthodox distinction of God's essence and God's energies, Habets wants to appropriate the theme in a more Torrancian fashion leaving behind this element and re-centering the doctrine on Christ and in atonement.

Though many still follow Harnack, it is becoming more common to view θεώσις along Torrance's lines rather than Harnack's. Notable theologians who are in agreement with Torrance are Georges Florovsky,³¹⁵ Trevor Hart,³¹⁶ and Donald Fairbairn.³¹⁷ The consensus of these scholars and Torrance is that though some of the Fathers, such as those following in extreme Origenism, indeed assumed much from Hellenistic philosophy in their theology, there was a strong biblical strain of thought, namely the Irenaeus-Athanasius-Cyril stream. These Fathers held to an intensely personal/Christological/Pneumatological conception of *theosis*. Torrance's role in recovering the Fathers from this accusation is highly significant.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued, by using Torrance's *Trinitarian Faith* with regular reference to his many other works, that Torrance's reading, use, and appropriation of the Fathers is an imaginative reconstruction of patristic theology into a Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* which is a Reformed evangelical version of classical

Accordingly Habets roots *theosis* in the vicarious humanity of Christ and in soteriology (rather than God's uncreated energies and sanctification). Bruce McCormack, on the other hand, is highly critical of any attempt to appropriate *theosis* into the Reformed tradition seeing the Penal Substitution as central and *theosis* as detracting from this defining Protestant doctrine. See Bruce McCormack, "The End of Reformed Theology? The Voice of Karl Barth in the Doctrinal Chaos of the Present" in *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity*, eds. Wallace M. Alston Jr. and Michael Welker, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 46–64.

³¹⁵ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 115.

³¹⁶ Trevor Hart, *Christ in Our Place* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1989), 152–182.

³¹⁷ See Donald Fairbairn, "Patristic Soteriology: Three Trajectories," 289–310 for an outstanding discussion on the different views of *theosis* among the Fathers and his argument for a personal view along Torrance's lines. It is noteworthy that Fairbairn asked Torrance to read chapter four of his PhD thesis which has been subsequently published as *Grace and Christology in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) on *theosis* and grace. Torrance kept this document until his death and it is preserved in the manuscript collection at Princeton Theological Seminary. See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 187.

Greek patristic themes. Torrance imaginatively reconstructs Greek patristic themes by (a) centering them upon the Nicene ὁμοούσιον (and, the best proponent, Athanasius the Great) and by (b) reading and using them theologically as opposed to patrologically or historically. Herein, Torrance uses the Fathers thematically and in a Christo-centric way. This chapter has labeled Torrance's imaginative reconstruction "the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum*" and this chapter has explored the two primary ways in which Torrance has reconstructed Greek patristic theology into this Reformed evangelical *Consensus Patrum*: (1) By re-organizing the Fathers into theological streams of thought centered upon Christ and (2) by extracting the "inner logic/connections" behind patristic theology, which Torrance sees as theological and "catholic" themes. Finally, this chapter has argued that the driving force behind the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* is Torrance's Reformed evangelical approach centered upon the Nicene ὁμοούσιον and that this emphasis has great merit inasmuch as it allowed Torrance truly fresh insight into the Fathers. Overall, Torrance's *Consensus Patrum* provides new insight into these Greek patristic themes and is an excellent reconstruction of theology on the basis of catholic themes. Torrance's emphasis on the close identity between God's being and God's acts (economy and ontology) is insightful and helpful by drawing out the patristic emphasis on divine initiative in salvation and revelation.³¹⁸ Furthermore, some of Torrance's contemporaries share this commitment in addition to

³¹⁸ As aforementioned, this is a Torrancian concept but is not a Torrancian way of putting it. Rather it is a name garnered from H.R. Mackintosh. See Mackintosh, *The Divine Initiative* for a classic discussion which undoubtedly influenced Torrance. .

Torrance's hope for a departure from the more Augustinian and Western approach.³¹⁹ Ultimately, Torrance's Christo-centric/Trinitarian and evangelical reading of the Fathers provides fresh insight into many elements of both patristic and Reformed theology, particularly asceticism, the vicarious humanity, and an ontological version of the atonement.

By returning to the Athanasius-Cyril axis of classical theology on sanctification and asceticism, Torrance bypasses the distinction between God's essence and energies, at least as it was expressed in the Losskian interpretation of the later ascetical tradition, and returns to the classical emphasis on a Christologically-centered asceticism.³²⁰ This is done by means of Torrance's

³¹⁹ For example the Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, whose approach in this regard is substantially similar to Torrance. See, for example, Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (Danvers: Crossroad, 1997). In this groundbreaking book, Rahner propagates a number of items akin to Torrance such as a Trinitarian reading of creation (see page 13). Most notably, Rahner proposes a departure from the Augustinian Trinitarian approach of his own Catholic tradition for he argued that, following Augustine and Aquinas, Western theology has separated the one God (*De Deo Uno*) from the Triune God (*De Deo Trino*) (see pages 9–48). Rahner proposes a return to the pre-Augustinian conception adopted by the Greek Fathers for, he says, “otherwise it is impossible to reach a doctrine of grace and of Christology” (see page 17). Rahner contends that, essentially, the traditional Western separation disconnects God in himself from God to us. Torrance and Rahner have shown how this deeply rooted theological problem causes serious problems both epistemologically and soteriologically. Torrance is actually very appreciative of Rahner's approach in *Trinitarian Perspectives* calling him in line in basic Trinitarian theology with both Barth and Athanasius. See Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 81–84. Furthermore, Torrance is similarly critical of Aquinas. See Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 4. Another Protestant example is Colin Gunton. See Colin E. Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, (London: T & T Clark, 2003); Colin Gunton, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Essays Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003). The following chapter will discuss Torrance departure from Augustine in full.

³²⁰ e.g. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 213. This is hugely important. On account of a multitude of misinterpretations (such as Lossky or those who view asceticism as a work to be done), Protestants have typically been fearful of this classic practice. The classical version of asceticism, however, roots the practice objectively in God's gracious self-giving in Christ. As such, it flows from salvation rather than playing any role in it. There are many figures who are within this classical line (e.g. Athanasius, Calvin, Scougal, Torrance) and it is to this classical line that Protestants wishing to retrieve asceticism should return. See further Radcliff, “A Reformed Asceticism.”

reconstruction of the Fathers on the means of the ὁμοούσιον centered reading of the Fathers' theology. This sheds fresh light on asceticism and sanctification.

Torrance's Reformed evangelical take on asceticism roots this classic practice in his Christology and soteriology instead of as a human work to be accomplished. As such, Torrance offers a huge contribution to asceticism in the Protestant tradition. Though Protestantism has inherited a great ascetical tradition from the Greek Fathers, owing to a potential temptation to understanding asceticism as a form of works based righteousness, the Protestant tradition has tended to stray away from using this word and discussing the concept.³²¹ Torrance returns to this theme and brings it back into his own Reformed tradition, with the Reformed emphasis on the finished work of Christ and salvation by grace. Here Torrance's combination of Greek patristic theology (asceticism) and Reformed theology (salvation entirely by grace) produces great fruits (asceticism by grace).³²² This can be of great service to the evangelical tradition of theology and his contribution herein cannot be overstated. This method can be applied further and one wonders whether Torrance's method could be applied further to a reading of the Byzantine ascetic tradition in light of the evangelical perspective of the

³²¹ Though it should be noted that many are returning to this important practice. See, for example, Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*; Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way*. It is often called "spiritual discipline/exercise" now.

³²² See Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People* for a similarly-minded combination of classic patristic theology and (in Noble's case) the Wesleyan tradition. In this publication of his 2012 Didsbury Lectures, Noble seeks to extricate the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection from any form of subjectivism and root it objectively in the doctrine of the Trinity and Christology (person and work). Noble argues that this was Wesley's view and it is in line with the Fathers.

Reformation with similar fruitfulness.³²³ Perhaps the great Byzantine ascetical tradition as encapsulated in the *Philokalia*³²⁴ could be better understood in light of the evangelical perspective of the Reformation. Here, Torrance's method could be applied further.³²⁵

Torrance's notion of the vicarious humanity has rooted salvation, sanctification, and *theosis* more fully in the person of Christ than traditionally has been done. The Torrancian vicarious humanity indeed recovers the Fathers from accusations of Apollinarianism, Monophysitism, and other heresies that deny the full integrity of Christ's humanity. Furthermore, it is a creative exploration of the Reformed notion of election rooted in Christ. There is debate where Calvin stood on the issue but later Reformed theology rooted election in God's eternal decrees.³²⁶ However, Karl Barth reformulated this doctrine by rooting God's election in Christ.³²⁷ Torrance picks this up and reformulates the concept further by means of the patristic concept of the humanity of Christ, the outcome being the Torrancian vicarious humanity.³²⁸

³²³ Torrance himself likely avoids the Byzantine ascetic tradition on account of perceived dualism.

³²⁴ Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, trans., *The Philokalia*. See also Tito Colliander, *Way of the Ascetics: The Ancient Tradition of Discipline and Inner Growth* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

³²⁵ See Radcliff, "A Reformed Asceticism," for further exploration of this idea.

³²⁶ See e.g. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 3. See Torrance's Introduction to *School of Faith* and also Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 125–153 for critiques of Federal theology's rooting of election in God's decrees rather than in Christ.

³²⁷ See Bruce McCormack, "Grace and Being: The role of God's gracious election in Karl Barth's theological ontology" in *Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* ed. John Webster, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 94.

³²⁸ Notably, Torrance sees the Christologically conditioned version of election affirmed in the evangelical Scottish tradition by figures such as John Knox and Robert Bruce. See Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 14 and 57, respectively.

However, it is notable that there is substantial disagreement with Torrance on the patristic rootedness of his view that Christ assumed fallen humanity.³²⁹ Is it possible that Torrance's stress on the patristic notion that in the incarnation Christ assumed the whole man causes him see an assumption of fallen humanity in places where the Fathers did not hold to it in the same he that he does?

Athanasius, for example, does speak of Christ's assumption of the whole man and in places he spoke as if Christ's body was entirely liable to death being mortal like any other human body. However, when he states this he immediately nuances it, arguing, "the indwelling of the Word loosed it from this natural liability"³³⁰ and would not have died any sort of natural death³³¹ and when discussing the uniqueness of the God-man Jesus, Athanasius states, "he took [his

³²⁹ Demetrios Bathrellos, argues that other than Nestorianism and divergent forms of divisive Christology in the early church, the unfallenness of Christ's assumed humanity was taken for granted. See Demetrios Bathrellos, "The Sinlessness of Jesus: A Theological Exploration in Light of Trinitarian Theology" in *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology*, ed. Paul Metzger, (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 113; 124, footnote 2. His contention is that in the incarnation Christ assumed unfallen humanity and redeemed humanity by its union with God. See pp. 118–119. His conclusion is that for Christ to have been true man, he needed to assume unfallen humanity because fallenness is not an essential part of what it means to truly be human. Georges Florovsky (relying upon Maximus the Confessor) argues that the Son assumed unfallen humanity (he calls it "the first formed human nature") and voluntarily submitted it to the fallen condition of humanity. See Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*, 97–98. He argues that sin is not an essential part of human nature but is rather a "parasitic and abnormal growth." Typically the Orthodox adhere to this view. See e.g. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 142. Though, there is also agreement with Torrance. Scholars such as Thomas Weinandy, concur with Torrance on this matter. See Thomas Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 23–38. The majority of Weinandy's conclusions are akin to Torrance's; the impetus of the argument being twofold: (1) By the incarnation sinful humanity was redeemed and (2) by the incarnation corrupt humanity was deified. Luminaries such as John Meyendorff and John Zizioulas also agree with Torrance and Weinandy. See further Baker, "The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance," 27. Again, part of the issue here seems to be that contemporary theologians seem to not work with the strict distinction between "fallen humanity" (which Christ assumed according to the Greek Fathers) and "sinful humanity" (which Christ did not assume according to the Greek Fathers).

³³⁰ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 4.20, PG 25b.129–132.

³³¹ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 4.21, PG 25b.132–133.

body] from a spotless, stainless virgin, without the agency of human father—a pure body, untainted by intercourse with man.”³³² Irenaeus as well speaks of Christ’s humanity itself as unique because of his virgin birth.³³³ Torrance often cites Gregory Nazianzen’s *Letter 101: To Cledonius*: “the unassumed is the unhealed.” Contextually, Gregory was speaking about the assumption of the human mind. Torrance may be right that the implication of this is the assumption of fallen humanity. However, is Gregory as clear on this as Torrance contended? In their polemics against Apollinarianism, the Fathers, such as Athanasius, Gregory, and Cyril asserted the assumption of humanity born into the situation of sin. However, did this necessarily mean sinful humanity?

A nuance missing from Torrance’s discussion of Christ’s assumption of fallen humanity which perhaps provides insight into the disagreement amongst scholars is Maximus the Confessor’s notion of “will.” For Maximus, whom those asserting Christ’s assumption of unfallen humanity typically reference in support of their view, there are two types of will, “natural will” (θέλημα φυσικόν) and “gnomic” will (θέλημα γνωμικόν).³³⁴ The gnomic will is a part of a human hypostasis whereas the

³³² Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 1.8, PG 25b.109.

³³³ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.21.10, PG 7a.0955–0056.

³³⁴ See Maximus *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 21, PG 91.312–316; *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, PG 91.313D–316A, 337B. Maximus distinguishes between the two stating that the natural will is a desire for things according to nature (κατὰ φύσιν) whereas the gnomic will is willful movement of reason (λογισμοῦ) towards something.” See PG 91.153A. See also John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, 3.14ff, PG 94.1034ff for a summary of the patristic view. The basic idea is that if Christ has a full divine nature and a full human nature he must have both a human and a divine will but since, contra Nestorianism, it must be asserted that Christ did not have a human hypostasis he only had a natural human will but not a hypostatic human will, the element of the human will which had fallen in Adam. That is, the gnomic will is connected to the will of the individual person. Thus, there is not a gnomic will in Christ because Christ’s individual person (hypostasis) is divine not human.

natural will was a part of the human nature. The gnostic will is the seat of sin and enslaved to sin whereas the natural will is entirely free. Therefore, for Maximus the incarnate Christ had a natural human will but not a human gnostic will. Therefore he assumed an unfallen will and kept this in addition to his divine will.³³⁵ Thus, for Maximus the assumption of a fallen gnostic will implies Nestorianism because it meant the assumption of two hypostases for Christ did not assume a fallen hypostasis because he did not have a human hypostasis at all; rather only one divine hypostasis. It is this view to which Orthodox theologians such as Florovsky and Lossky are referring. Thus, when they explain what they mean by “unfallen humanity” they clarified that it was Maximus and the concept of gnostic will to which they are referring.³³⁶

Torrance may have been aware of this nuance but simply did not find it helpful for his purposes. As Baker points out, in at least one early work Torrance states that Christ did not assume a fallen will.³³⁷ However, in his dogmatic lectures, for example, the assumption of a fallen will seems integral to his theology.³³⁸ It is furthermore notable that Torrance does not use many Eastern Fathers post-Cyril

See also Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of the Man* for a related distinction (he distinguishes between the “vegetative soul” and “rational soul.”

³³⁵ John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian thought* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975), 112ff. See Maximus *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 21, PG 9.312–16.

³³⁶ Related to this, the Eastern Fathers tend to view each individual soul as created by God whereas the Western Fathers often view the soul as inherited from one's parents. See e.g. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*. He argues that each soul is created by God and because God is free from the necessity of sin so each soul created by God is free from the necessity of sin, that is, until it wills to sin by choice. Augustine seems to waver but tends towards viewing the soul as inherited in order to defend his doctrine of original sin against Pelagianism. See e.g. *Epistle* 166.27. Cf. Jerome, *Epistle* 126.

³³⁷ Baker, “The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance,” 23–24.

³³⁸ Torrance, *Atonement*, 437–447.

other than Severus of Antioch and John Philoponus, both of whom have traditionally been accused of having Monophysistic leanings.³³⁹ Often the Monophysites emphasized the assumption of fallen humanity and its subsequent transformation by deification.³⁴⁰ Regardless, Torrance does not employ this nuance as captured by Maximus, perhaps on account of his bypassing of Byzantine theology and returning to the Nicene tradition.³⁴¹

Another nuance missing is a precise definition of “inherited sin.” In the Augustinian tradition there is inherited corruption as well as inherited guilt, however, in the Eastern tradition the focus is solely on being born into a situation of corruption.³⁴² Thus it is likely that the Greek Fathers asserted Christ’s assumption of the whole corrupted man and, as Noble states, for the Greek Fathers, “‘fallenness’ is more of an *ontological* than a *moral* category.”³⁴³

³³⁹ Baker, “The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance,” 25.

³⁴⁰ Though Iain Torrance successfully locates Severus less in the “Monophysite” camp (as traditionally understood) and more in line with classical Nicene and Cyrilline theology. See Iain R. Torrance, *Christology After Chalcedon: Severus of Antioch and Severus the Monophysite* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1988). Here Iain Torrance argues that Severus distanced himself from both Nestorianism and Eutychianism and evades critiques of Monophysitism in the traditional sense, building upon certain recent trajectories of readings of so-called Monophysitism. See e.g. 14–19 for his location of the project within the recent trends.

³⁴¹ More on this in the following chapter.

³⁴² See John Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin* (Ridgewood: Zephyr, 2008). This text is Romanides doctoral dissertation. He argues that the Latin tradition, due primarily to Augustine, focuses too heavily on the forensic elements of the Fall, the Cross, and “inherited sin.” His conclusion is that the Greek tradition has preserved a much more robust and biblical conception of the Fall, the Cross, and “inherited sin,” namely, being born into a situation of sin and the consequences of sin, namely death, but not inheriting the guilt of sin.

³⁴³ Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*, 164.

For the Latin Fathers “fallenness” also included guilt. In argument against Pelagius, Augustine asserts humanity’s inheritance of Adam’s guilt.³⁴⁴ According to the version of “fallenness” and redemption of the Greek Fathers, Christ’s assumption of the “whole man” means body and soul and when the Greek Fathers discuss Christ being born into fallen humanity they mean being born into a state of mortality. This would mean that Christ assumed humanity that was in the same situation and state as the rest of humanity, namely, humanity corrupted and dying. However, this would not necessarily mean Christ assumed humanity tainted by guilt. Torrance himself seems to hold to a concept of inherited sin including inherited guilt.³⁴⁵ Torrance’s emphasis (or, lack of nuance) may furthermore be because of his focus on the noetic effects of the Fall, which was so central to his theology of the vicarious humanity of Christ.³⁴⁶

So, the question arises: Where, then, did Torrance learn this reading of the Greek Fathers? Torrance may have learned his reading of the Greek Fathers on this subject from his beloved teacher H.R. Mackintosh. Torrance states:

³⁴⁴ *On merit and the forgiveness of sins and the baptism of infants*. PL 44:109–200. Contrast this with Athanasius who asserts being born into a state of corruption and death. See Athanasius, *Contra Apollinaris* 1.7 PG 26.1104–1105. See further Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*. Romanides articulates the now traditional Eastern Orthodox view that the Fall consisted of death (ontological) rather than a punishment (forensic) from God. Humanity inherits mortality from their parents but not guilt or punishment from God. Christ, being born of a virgin, was born outside this cycle and therefore able to free humankind from it. See pp. 155–169.

³⁴⁵ See Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” 477. The nuance is largely missing in Torrance, however.

³⁴⁶ See the epilogue to Torrance, *Atonement*, 437–447: “The Reconciliation of the Mind.” The Torrance archives at Princeton Seminary contains a handwritten note by Torrance which states: “Sin is existential severance from the truth but in order to understand that properly we must be in the truth.” See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 52.

I recall [Mackintosh] directing of us to Gregory Nazianzen's principle that 'the unassumed is the unhealed', with special reference to the fact that in becoming incarnate the Holy Son of God assumed our flesh of sin, thereby condemning sin the flesh in order to sanctify, heal and redeem us.³⁴⁷

Perhaps embedded within the view taught by Mackintosh in his classes was a Western view of "fallenness."

Ultimately, none of this is meant to question the legitimacy of Torrance's view that Christ assumed fallen humanity; this may very well be a legitimate theological point to assert. Furthermore, the Fathers do assert Christ's assumption of fallen humanity.³⁴⁸ Rather, this is meant to offer an attempt at making sense of the wide-ranging disagreement with Torrance on this issue, noting potentially missing nuances in Torrance's discussion which might bring the theological conversation forward. Perhaps Torrance's concept of the fallen humanity of Christ is better called a patristic "principle," as Robert Walker helpfully puts it.³⁴⁹

Torrance's Christologically centered soteriology, particularly his theology of the vicarious humanity of Christ offers not only an imaginative reconstruction of

³⁴⁷ See *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum: T.F. Torrance—My Theological Development*. The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Series II, Box 10. Interestingly, in contrast to these lectures which Torrance remembers, Mackintosh's language is somewhat different in the *Appendix* to his book *The Person of Jesus Christ*: "[Christ's humanity] is a new humanity, unique in perfectness of initial constitution." See p. 533. Furthermore, Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer hold to this view. Bonhoeffer states: "Liability to sin and self-will are an *essential* part of our flesh. Christ became involved in the predicament of the whole flesh....he is man as we are; he is tempted on all sides as we are, indeed far more dangerously than we are." See Metzger, *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology*, 113. Perhaps Torrance learned this from Barth, or, from Barth via Mackintosh.

³⁴⁸ See Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*, 163–175 for an overview of the notion of "fallenness" in the Greek Fathers.

³⁴⁹ Walker, "Incarnation and Atonement: Their Relation and Inter-Relation in the Theology of T.F. Torrance," 32–34. That is, a principle that Torrance develops from the Fathers.

Irenaeus' doctrine of recapitulation³⁵⁰ but also an evangelical and Christo-centric approach to asceticism, piety, and godliness via the vicarious humanity. Torrance provides fresh insight into not only patristic Christology in general but also the vicarious humanity of Christ in particular. Patristics scholars had not discussed this theme and Torrance draws it out of Athanasius and the other Fathers very insightfully and imaginatively. Indeed by situating the patristic theological themes of *theosis*, asceticism, and simply reading the Fathers via a perspective focused upon grace and the vicarious humanity Torrance draws out elements from the Fathers not appreciated by patristics scholars to date.³⁵¹

Intrinsically connected to Torrance's departure from the Augustinian tradition and return to the Greek patristic tradition and his departure from later Reformed confessions (especially the Westminster Standards) and return to the ὁμοούσιον is his departure from Federal theology and the *ordo salutis* and return to the doctrine of union with Christ and focus on the person of Christ.³⁵² This is clear from his emphasis on the ὁμοούσιον and Greek patristic themes such as *theosis*. This chapter discussed Torrance's activity in this regard and how Torrance proposes a more Greek, personal, and incarnational soteriology as opposed to the

³⁵⁰ Baker, "The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance," 42: "Torrance's notion of the vicarious humanity of Christ...must be regarded as a major restatement of the Irenaeian doctrine of recapitulation."

³⁵¹ Baker states that his fellow Eastern Orthodox theologians have much to learn from Torrance in this regard. See Baker, "The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance," 42.

³⁵² Torrance is highly critical of the *ordo salutis* in Federal Calvinism because he thinks it operates with a medieval conception that "reversed the teaching of Calvin that it is through union with Christ *first* that we participate in all his benefits" (i.e. as opposed to participating in Christ's benefits and then in Christ himself). See Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 128.

more Latin, functional, and atonement centered soteriology traditional in Reformed theology.

Torrance's emphasis on Greek patristic soteriology is a fresh perspective in light of ongoing debates, particularly in North America, over such things as "double imputation."³⁵³ Torrance, relying upon the Greek patristic tradition, takes the emphasis away from such things as double imputation and returns it to the person of Christ.³⁵⁴ His return to a Greek patristic approach over and against a more Western approach could provide a helpful lens for dissatisfied Protestants. Many Reformed and evangelical theologians have been following Torrance in this regard such as Donald Fairbairn in patristics,³⁵⁵ Andrew Purves in pastoral theology,³⁵⁶ Myk Habets and Bobby Grow in regards to reading Calvin and Calvinism,³⁵⁷ and J. Todd Billings in theology and ministry.³⁵⁸ These theologians are adopting Torrance's approach³⁵⁹ and imaginatively reconstructing their various theological

³⁵³ The debate between John Piper and N.T. Wright for example.

³⁵⁴ This is not an argument for Torrance's disagreement with double imputation. Rather, the soteriology of Torrance and the Greek Fathers would likely include double imputation but this would not be their emphasis.

³⁵⁵ Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*; Fairbairn, "Patristic Soteriology: Three Trajectories," 289–310. Fairbairn's project reviewed patristic doctrines such as *theosis* in light of a personal and Christocentric notion of grace which he sees as patristic (Cyril of Alexandria and John Cassian in his book).

³⁵⁶ Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2004).

³⁵⁷ Myk Habets and Bobby Grow, eds., *Evangelical Calvinism: Essays Resourcing the Continuing Reformation of the Church* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012).

³⁵⁸ Billings, *Union with Christ*. Though Billings' book is not without certain problems. See further Jason Radcliff, Review of *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* by J. Todd Billings, *Theology in Scotland* 19, no. 2 (Autumn 2012): 81–83.

³⁵⁹ Often directly from Torrance. Habets wrote a PhD dissertation on Torrance and Purves was Torrance's student.

specializations on the basis of an emphasis on union with Christ reminiscent of Torrance.

The Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* also consists of catholic figures and streams which Torrance constructs around the themes discussed in this chapter. The following chapter will explore the streams that Torrance saw in theological history and explore the way in which Torrance constructs them around around the catholic themes particularly the Nicene ὁμοούσιον. So, it is the catholic figures and themes of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* which this thesis shall next explore.

Chapter 3

T.F. Torrance's *Consensus Patrum*: Catholic figures and streams

It is only when Greek Patristic Theology is studied and interpreted in the strong Biblical perspective restored through the Reformation of the Church in the West that its permanent place in the foundations of Evangelical Theology may be appreciated in a new way...[and] when Reformed Theology is reassessed and interpreted in light of its ancient roots in the evangelical theology of the early centuries that its essential catholicity and its unifying force are to be understood.

Thomas F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement*, 21–22.

3.1 Introduction

Chapter one explored the notion of the *Consensus Patrum* in historical Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism. This chapter argued that despite a brief respite in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, classic Protestantism has long contended for a *consensus*. Though there have been differing views as to what the *consensus* looks like and consists of, classic Protestantism has consistently looked to it. The previous chapter explored the catholic themes that comprise the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum*. Chapter two also examined how Torrance extracts these themes from patristic theology and imaginatively reconstructs them in light of Reformed and evangelical theology. The argument that Torrance reconstructs these themes around the central theme of the ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί ran throughout and the chapter explored the way in which this key Nicene theme affects the rest of the the Torrancian *consensus* serving as its lynchpin.

Torrance not only imaginatively reconstructs catholic themes but also catholic figures and streams or threads. This chapter shall discuss Torrance's grand vision of the patristic era as well as the creative connections he makes to it. Torrance had a panoply of sources he was working with and certain pieces simply did not fit into the vision he had of the inner connections lying behind church history and the different streams of theology.¹ This vision drives his method and the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* emerges out of it in full force. Torrance understands there to have been a number of figures and streams of thought in the patristic era, some more pious and orthodox than others. In this chapter the different figures and streams comprising the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* as well as their relationships shall be explored. In Torrance's connections of these figures and reconstruction of them into streams, the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* palate emerges in all its fullness.

This chapter will argue that Torrance reconstructs² theological history into "streams," namely the evangelical stream whose fulcrum is the "Athanasius-Cyril

¹ A quick glance at any of his books reveals that Torrance was extremely widely read. His brother David Torrance remembers of his brother's university days: "The university librarian apparently had never met a student who borrowed so many books. He often returned home with an entire rucksack full. He read far beyond the books prescribed for his particular study." Apparently one of his professors even called him a "mine of learning." See David Torrance, "Recollections and Reflections," *Participatio: The Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship*, vol. 1 (2009): 29. His nephew, Robert Walker, ruminates, "He read voluminously and would absorb and retain ideas. In both church and university he soon became recognized as something of a polymath, at home in several fields, not only in theology itself but in philosophy and science, particularly in the field of science and theology for which he later became so well known." See Robert Walker, "Recollections and Reflections," *Participatio: The Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship*, vol. 1 (2009): 39.

² Robert Walker states: "TF's theology is highly original, which does not mean first and foremost that he developed new concepts, although he did, but that he made new connections between

axis,” the Cappadocian distinction which led to the dualist Byzantine stream, and the dualist Western/Latin stream. The Nicene/evangelical stream is the core to the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* because of its Christological centeredness on the ὁμοούσιον and the evangelical perspective it preserves; the other streams are departures from the *consensus* typically rooted in some sort of dualism. Torrance, though Reformed and evangelical, does not solely emphasize the Protestant Reformers or the Reformed Scholastics (though he is appreciative of many of them) but returns to classical theological figures from church history. He also departs from the typical Western emphasis on Augustine by returning to the Greek Fathers. Some of Torrance’s connections are more traditional and some are extremely creative. These streams are an imaginative reconstruction of the Fathers in themselves and are driven by the themes discussed in chapter two, primarily the Reformed, dogmatic, and evangelical commitment to the Nicene ὁμοούσιον. This chapter will explore the different figures, streams, and connections in the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* emerging on the basis of the themes.

3.2 The Evangelical Stream

In Torrance’s vision there is one overarching stream running throughout the church’s history: The evangelical stream. Torrance understands the *consensus* to be connected on the basis of a common mindset rather than a truly numerical agreement (as in the Vincentian method discussed in chapter one). He believes that certain eras of theological history best captured the inner structure of the

known theological ideas and concepts. For him, originality was not necessarily thinking new thoughts but making new connections.” See Walker, “Recollections and Reflections,” 43.

Gospel.³ Torrance sees these eras connected to one another as a sort of “golden thread” running throughout theological history.⁴

The three instances that best captured this inner structure are Nicaea (particularly Athanasius), the Reformation (particularly Calvin), and contemporary evangelical theology (particularly Karl Barth).⁵ Herein, Torrance sees the Reformation emphasis on grace as complementary to the Nicene emphasis on the ὁμοούσιον.⁶ As such, Torrance creatively connects Nicene theology and his Reformed evangelical tradition.⁷ This is entirely consistent with his immense

³ See further Elmer Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 360.

⁴ Though peripheral to the present study, it is interesting that Torrance connects a number of non-theological figures to this stream as well on account of their realist epistemological perspective. The four main figures are John Philoponus, Michael Polanyi, James Clerk Maxwell, and Albert Einstein. In turn, Torrance uses the non-theological figures to shed light on the theological figures and *vice versa*. For example, John Philoponus (490–570 C.E.) is one of Torrance’s favorite insights into Athanasius. Torrance sees Philoponus as carrying the relational view of space and time from patristic theology into the realm of physics. By doing so, Torrance contends, Philoponus preserves three key points: (1) The doctrine of one God, (2) the doctrine of the goodness of creation, and (3) that God conferred rationality upon nature. See *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 5–6. Torrance contends that James Clerk Maxwell (1831–1879 C.E.), Michael Polanyi (1891–1976 C.E.), and Albert Einstein (1879–1955 C.E.) all shared in the basic κατὰ φύσιν method of scientific inquiry. See *Preaching Christ Today*, 45. Torrance sees Einstein as a propagator of a similar view of space and time to the Nicene Fathers, chiefly Athanasius. See p. 16. For Torrance the doctrine of the ὁμοούσιον propagates Einstein’s *theory of relativity*, at its core, before Einstein. Torrance argues that Einstein combated the dualism latent in the thought of his time, because of Cartesian and Newtonian assumptions, much the same way Athanasius combated the dualism latent in his culture, because of Hellenistic and Arian thought. See *Theology in Reconciliation*, 74–75. Torrance argues that the Fathers, prior to Einstein, put forth the core of the Relativity Theory, for they realized that the Biblical view of God’s relation to mankind would not work with a “container notion” of space and time, but only with a “relational notion.” See Torrance, *Incarnation*, 218.

⁵ Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology*, 14–15. See also, *Preaching Christ Today*, 20 and *Theology in Reconciliation*, 235–237 and *Theology in Reconciliation*, 285. See also Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 267.

⁶ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 225. Torrance considers grace to be intrinsically personal as it was connected to the person of Jesus Christ. See Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today*, 20–21. See also his PhD thesis written under Barth: *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers*.

⁷ More specifically, Torrance connects John Calvin to the Greek Fathers via Calvin’s theology of *pietas* and *religio*. Torrance argues that this was the same as Greek patristic *eusebia*. Inherently connected to this, in Torrance’s thought, is also the “realist epistemology” of Athanasius. Additionally, Torrance argues that for Calvin this meant that terms must, therefore, remain open to

stress upon the shared identity between the giver of grace and the gift of grace and his assertion of the intensely personal nature of grace, discussed in the previous chapter.

Torrance sees Karl Barth as inheriting these two traditions and bringing them together.⁸ Regarding the intrinsic connection of Reformed and Nicene theology Torrance states:

When Greek Patristic Theology is studied and interpreted in the strong Biblical perspective restored through the Reformation of the Church in the West that its permanent place in the foundations of Evangelical Theology may be appreciated in a new way...[and] when Reformed Theology is reassessed and interpreted in light

being defined by the realities they signify. See *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 41–47. See also *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 10. In an interesting discussion on the relation to Calvin's hermeneutical method to that of his context, Torrance argues that despite the fact that his medieval context had forgotten the patristic conception of words as images pointing to a reality, Calvin returned to this method and in doing followed the Athanasian conception of words pointing to realities in a dynamic way. See *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988), 91. See also pp. 164–165 where he describes Calvin's theological methodology in nearly identical terms to the way he conceived of Athanasian theological methodology. Torrance finds Calvin's view of accommodation to be substantially similar to the Greek Fathers as well. Torrance contends Calvin returned to the concept of "realist epistemology" and a dynamic conception of the Word. Herein, Calvin returned to the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ and tied the doctrine into the realm of epistemology, thereby returning to Athanasius-Hilary and departing from Origen-Augustine. See Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 83–88.

⁸ There is precedent for this insightful connection. See Johannes Roldanus, *Le Christ Et L'homme Dans La Théologie d'Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Leiden: Brill, 1968). See especially pp. 2, 4, 218–219, 359, and 373. In this groundbreaking work, Roldanus explores the anthropology of Athanasius as created "according to the image of God." He argues that Athanasius asserts a strict distinction between God and creation. Though Anatolios is critical of Roldanus on this point. See Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*, 228. Anatolios calls Roldanus' reading of Athanasius a "Barthian eisegesis" at times. Anatolios sees a more dynamic interaction between God and humanity in the thought of Athanasius (as opposed to the strict dichotomy he sees drawn in Barth and Roldanus' reading of Athanasius). Sometimes Torrance's emphasis on salvation entirely from the side of God and his attack on any form of traditional natural theology does (in a way similar to Roldanus) make Athanasius look like a strict Barthian and the ὁμοούσιον sound like a Barthian theology of revelation and salvation but, overall, he simply sees overlap in their shared commitment to a theology driven by the incarnation and God's presence with humankind and imaginatively reconstructs each in light of the other. Thus, Torrance might say: Athanasius was a Barthian and Barth was an Athanasian. Furthermore, Torrance's emphasis on the vicarious humanity of Christ acts somewhat as a balance to this inasmuch as, for Torrance, God's interacts directly with the world via the humanity of Christ.

of its ancient roots in the evangelical theology of the early centuries that its essential catholicity and its unifying force are to be understood.⁹

This quote illuminates Torrance's evangelical stream and his understanding of the connection between patristic theology, best exhibited by Athanasius; and Reformed theology, best exhibited by John Calvin; and preserved and re-presented in modern times by Karl Barth. Torrance also asserts that there were three stages/instances of theology that affirmed the notion that divine revelation is God revealing his *ὁυσία* to humankind: patristic (*ὁμοούσιον*), Reformation ("the immediate act of God in the presence of the Being as revealed"), and Karl Barth (bringing the two together; being-in-act and act-in-being).¹⁰ Elsewhere, Torrance explicates that the Fathers emphasized the being of God in his acts and the Reformers emphasized the acts of God in his being.¹¹ He clarifies this by pointing out that although the Fathers of Nicaea preserved the teaching that Jesus is God, this core concept did not find its way into the rest of the life of the Church, especially in the West, and thus "many aspects of the Church were allowed luxuriant growth that was unchecked and uncriticized by the central dogma of Christ."¹² The Reformers, argues Torrance, attempted carry this into every aspect of the church. He states, "it was an attempt to put Christ and his Gospel once again into the very centre and to carry through extensive reform by bringing everything into conformity to him and his Gospel."¹³

⁹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 21–22.

¹⁰ Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology*, 14–15. See also, *Preaching Christ Today*, 20 and *Theology in Reconciliation*, 235–237 and 285.

¹¹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 230.

¹² Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 265.

¹³ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 265.

The Reformation is thus “not contrary to but complementary to that of Nicaea, Ephesus, Chalcedon, etc.”¹⁴

Torrance sees Barth as inheriting these two traditions and combining them dynamically. As such, Barth is the funnel through which the Nicene theology of the ὁμοούσιον of Christ and the Reformation theology of the ὁμοούσιον of grace are dynamically combined and filtered into contemporary Western theology.

Furthermore, in many ways Torrance sees Barth as a modern Athanasius, or to put it another way, Athanasius as an ancient Barth.

Torrance connects Barth and Athanasius directly on a number of levels, but primarily in his Triadology and the emphasis on the dynamic nature of the being of God¹⁵ and sees Barth as the theologian who brought the Trinity back to the forefront of theology and in doing so returning modern theology to classical theology.¹⁶ Torrance consistently maintains that both Barth and Athanasius asserted a Triadology that affirms God to us is God in himself. Torrance believes Barth was doing this in order to preserve the conception that the gift of grace and the giver of grace are identical.¹⁷ Torrance states this in a number of ways including his argument that for both theologians, God is “Being in Person.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 265. See also Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” 462–463.

¹⁵ Though Torrance also claims that Barth’s “realist view” of the Bible was similar if not identical to the Athanasian and Greek patristic notion of σκοπός. See Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology*, 101. See also *Diving Meaning*, 130–178 for Torrance’s view of Athanasius’ hermeneutics.

¹⁶ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 7–10; Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” 462.

¹⁷ Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology*, 146. Torrance also argues that Calvin and Gregory Nazianzen had similar views on the doctrine of the Trinity. He says that they both held that the Ἀρχή of the Godhead, rather than being rooted in one person, is rooted in the being of God. See Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 62–63.

¹⁸ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 4. While not entirely dismissive of connecting Athanasius to Barth, Anatolios argues whereas for Barth the emphasis is entirely on divine otherness, for

Elsewhere, Torrance elaborates upon this in more detail when he connects the Athanasian concepts of ἐνούσιος λόγος and ἐνούσιος ἐνέργια¹⁹ directly to the Barthian conception of “Being-in-Act and Act-in-Being.”²⁰ Torrance sees these two concepts as not only mutually informing but as asserting the same basic theology, namely, that there is no disconnection between the ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity.²¹

Torrance understands this evangelical stream to have run from Athanasius/Cyril through Anselm,²² Kierkegaard,²³ certain figures in Scottish

Athanasius and Irenaeus the focus on divine otherness is inextricably connected with divine condescension. Anatolios argues that the polemic against the *analogia entis* found in Barth is not at all a part of the Athanasian system. For Barth revelation and salvation are entirely from the side of God and not at all intrinsic to humanity. See *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*, 207–208. Anatolios argues that for Athanasius, while still completely from the side of God who is always ὁ ποιῶν (*the one doing*), salvation is by cooperation with God's grace. Thus, while for both Athanasius and Barth salvation and revelation are entirely from the side of God who was the effector, for Barth this is something entirely extrinsic to creation whereas for Athanasius this is something intrinsic to creation by grace. See pp. 177–187. Though surely this is an over-simplification of Barth's theology. Anatolios' picture of Barth as distinct from Athanasius sounds like the *Der Römerbrief* era Barth. See Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Edwyn Hoskins, trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933). Yet, in his essays on the humanity of God, the kinship between Barth and Athanasius is more along the lines of Torrance's depiction. See Karl Barth, *Humanity of God* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999).

¹⁹ See Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 72 citing *Theology in Reconciliation* 222f, 226ff, 235ff.

²⁰ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 149. See also *The Mediation of Christ*, 40.

²¹ See Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 28 citing Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.1 (Edinburgh, 2nd edn, 1975), p. 380.

²² Torrance connects Anselm (c. 1033–1109 C.E.) to the Nicene stream most significantly in regards to his theological method. Torrance sees Anselm as sharing an “axiomatic” method with Athanasius. See *God and Rationality*, 100–101. Torrance sees Anselm as approaching theology in a similar if not the same way as Athanasius. Thus for Torrance, there was an element of Athanasian thought in the medieval west preserved by Anselm; though, Torrance has certain problem with Anselm's doctrine of the atonement which he believes was more of an external and forensic exchange. See “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” 477.

²³ Torrance connects Athanasius, Anselm, and Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855 C.E.) together as propagating “axiomatic” thinking. See *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 86–93. This perhaps explains why Torrance included both Anselm's *Epistle on the Incarnation* and *On the Procession of the Spirit* and Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* in his assigned reading for his Dogmatics courses at New College. Additionally, for his dogmatics seminars he assigned Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* combined with Hilary's *On the Trinity* and Athanasius' *Contra Arianos* and *Letters on the Spirit*. See his

theology, and finally to its climax in Barth (and H.R. Mackintosh who was a conduit of Barthian theology into Scotland). Furthermore, Torrance argues that there is an evangelical stream within the Scottish Reformed theological tradition which preserved Greek patristic theology.²⁴ Torrance's book *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* is an account of the Scottish theological tradition's recurring struggle with varying levels of dualism, legalism, and logicalized scholastic thought and the evangelical stream running through it back to the Nicene era.²⁵

Torrance sees the evangelical stream in the Scottish church preserved in such figures as Robert Boyd, John Forbes of Corse, and John McLeod Campbell. For Torrance, Robert Boyd was indebted to the Greek Fathers, particularly Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, and John Chrysostom²⁶ and John Forbes of Corse was indebted

Dogmatics Syllabus in The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 51.

²⁴ Torrance argues that pagan dualism infiltrated theology via Augustine, and despite Thomas Aquinas' attempt to eradicate this from theology by means of Aristotelian metaphysics, by the time of the Reformation there existed a dualism between Scripture and the Word of God. Torrance argues that John Reuchlin (a German theologian who lived from 1455–1522 C.E.) challenged this view and the Scot John Major affirmed the challenge (1467–1550 C.E.) with the argument that with Nicaea it must be propagated that the Word of God who came to mankind in the Scriptures is ὁμοούσιον with God. See Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today*, 18–19. Thus, Torrance sees the evangelical stream running into parts of Scottish Reformed theology. However, see Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 125–158 and Torrance, *The School of Faith*, xvi–xxi for Torrance's critique of non-evangelical Reformed theology. See also Torrance, *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 213–240 for Torrance's account of dualism pervasive in Western theology.

²⁵ Torrance, *Scottish Theology*. Torrance sees the older Scottish tradition as steeped in Greek patristic theology (see pp. 49–90), John Knox as essentially evangelical but struggling with notions of limited atonement and double predestination (see pp. 1–45), and Federal theology (epitomized in Westminster Calvinism) as "logicalized Calvinism" which separated God from Christ in a Nestorian fashion and God's being from God's acts in a medieval scholastic way (see pp. 93; 125–153).

²⁶ See Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 66–74.

to Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, and Cyril of Alexandria.²⁷

McLeod Campbell's emphasis upon the personal nature of the atonement was inherently evangelical as well, according to Torrance.²⁸ Torrance understands the later figures to have developed the ideas of the earlier figures and indeed to complement one another.²⁹

The fount of this evangelical stream is the Nicene stream (and its best exponent, Athanasius) and the themes (especially the *ὁμοούσιον*). Torrance sees other, diverging, streams of theological history: The Augustinian stream (leading into Latin Scholasticism) and the Cappadocian distinction (leading into the Byzantine trajectory), both of which were problematically rooted in some form of dualism.³⁰ Torrance is, as a western and as a Protestant uniquely returning to the Greek tradition of Athanasius and Cyril over and against the Augustinian tradition.

3.3 The Augustinian stream

Perhaps the clearest example of Torrance's departure from the typically Western and typically Reformed reading of the Fathers is his emphasis on the Greek Fathers, particularly Athanasius and Cyril, and his less positive reception of Augustine.³¹ Typically Protestants see their doctrines of justification, especially grace and election, as traceable in some form back to Augustine; however, they

²⁷ Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 80.

²⁸ Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 287–315.

²⁹ Such as Anselm who deepened the church's understanding of the *homoousion*. See Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 265.

³⁰ See below.

³¹ It should be noted that Torrance's critique is typically more of "Augustinian thought" than Augustine himself. See, e.g., Torrance, *Gospel, Church, and Ministry*, ed. Jock Stein, 209 and Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 12. Perhaps Augustine was not really an "Augustinian."

have not traditionally located any version of these doctrines in the Greek Fathers in a substantial way.³² This is likely because of the Protestant evangelical emphasis upon the doctrine of justification, particularly penal substitution, over all other doctrines and, therefore, the perceived lack of relevance of the Fathers prior to Augustine on justification.³³ Regardless of the reason, however, Protestant evangelicals (especially Torrance's own Reformed tradition) have often avoided the Greek Fathers.³⁴ The previous chapter explored the way in which Torrance emphasizes Greek patristic themes such as *theosis* as opposed to typically Reformed evangelical themes such as penal substitution (albeit, holding them together). Accordingly, Torrance's emphasis is on the Greek Fathers and not Augustine. As such, Torrance magnifies the ways in which the Protestant, particularly evangelical, tradition is truly in line with the Greek patristic tradition.

Torrance departs from Augustinian thought because he considers it "inherently dualistic."³⁵ In *Trinitarian Faith* Torrance cites Augustine a mere ten

³² Hence the many "discoveries" discussed in chapter one.

³³ See e.g. McCormack, "The End of Reformed Theology? The Voice of Karl Barth in the Doctrinal Chaos of the Present" in *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity*, eds. Alston Jr. and Welker, 46–64. McCormack here (and elsewhere) argues for the centrality of Penal Substitution for Reformed theology.

³⁴ See e.g. Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) who spends (a meager) seven pages on the pre-Augustinian tradition. Of course, McGrath's book is excellent on the Western tradition and has become the standard text on this subject. So, this is not to critique McGrath on what he does, simply to say that his approach is illustrative of the greater Protestant assumption (a) that justification is central and (b) that the Greek Fathers do not have much to say on justification.

³⁵ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 285. Though, notably, Torrance refers to Augustine's Triadology positively: "Augustine was said not to know Greek but there is no doubt that his *De Trinitate* is steeped in the teaching of the Greek Fathers..." Torrance thinks Augustine received this theology from Hilary of Poitiers. See Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 22.

times³⁶ and throughout the rest of his many writings on the Fathers his general approach to Augustine, especially regarding his soteriology, is negative. Torrance considers Augustine dualist³⁷ and sees elements of a Nestorian-type separation of God in himself from God to us.³⁸ According to Torrance this dualism in Augustinian theology pervaded even to Western (starting with Tertullian) and Augustinian theology of the sacraments, dividing the work of God and the work of man in the sacraments, emphasizing the latter rather than the former.³⁹

Torrance contends that the dualist elements of Reformed thought were inherited from Augustinian thought.⁴⁰ He is particularly critical of dualist views of the atonement and election that separate God from Christ which he sees as stemming from Augustinian convictions and being deeply rooted in Western

³⁶ See Appendix. Gerald Bonner states: "More than most authors Augustine has been the object of unjustified denunciation by those who have not read him." See the quotation in Michel René Barnes, "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity" in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 145. This is not to imply that Torrance did not read Augustine. However, it is a plausible inference from the lack of references to him in *Trinitarian Faith* that Torrance does not indwell Augustine in the same way he does Athanasius nor accord him the same level of detailed study he offers the Nicene stream in *Trinitarian Faith*.

³⁷ Both cosmological and epistemological dualism. See Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 11–12.

³⁸ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 13–14.

Torrance contends that Byzantine dualism (Gregory Palamas, John of Damascus, etc.) was basically similar to Augustinian dualism in their division of God from Christ.

³⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 95–99. Though Torrance is actually fond of Augustine's view; he is simply critical of Augustinian thought. See pp. 97–98. He sees the Augustinian stream emphasizing the "inward grace" part of Augustine's theology of the sacraments and not Augustine's view of God acting in the sacraments. He sees both of these present in Augustine but thinks the Augustinian stream wrongly emphasized the human side rather than the divine side.

⁴⁰ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 13. He was particularly critical of Calvin's doctrine of election, presumably the disconnection of this from his Christology. See Torrance's friend J.K.S. Reid's magisterial article on this: Reid, "The Office of Christ in Predestination," 5–19.

theology.⁴¹ Torrance ultimately sees the perversions to which the Reformers Protested against as rooted in Augustinian theology.⁴²

Torrance as western, Protestant, Reformed, and, in many ways, following Calvin in his reading of church history and tradition was, therefore, absolutely unique in his attack on Augustine and return to the Greek patristic tradition. Chapter one examined how both the Roman Catholic and Protestant (especially Reformed) branches of Western Christianity have traditionally emphasized Augustine over the Greek tradition.⁴³ Yet, as argued, Torrance sees himself most in line with the Scottish evangelical tradition, more reliant upon the Greek Fathers.⁴⁴ Here Torrance has shown that the Reformed evangelical tradition is indeed in line with the Greek patristic tradition (and not solely the Latin patristic tradition).⁴⁵ This is ecumenically relevant for it has not only portrayed how the Reformed evangelical tradition is in line with the Greek patristic tradition but also has, herein,

⁴¹ See e.g. Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy."

⁴² Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement: Volume 1*, 76.

⁴³ With notable exceptions. See Rahner, *The Trinity*.

⁴⁴ See Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, particularly his discussion of John Forbes of Corse. See also Torrance, Introduction to *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper; Sermons on the Sacrament Preached in the Kirk of Edinburgh by Robert Bruce in AD 1589*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance, (London: James Clarke, 1958). Torrance sees Bruce as following the Greek Fathers over Augustine. See also Torrance, Introduction to *The School of Faith*. Torrance sees the Scottish Reformed tradition having a more Christological emphasis and lens.

⁴⁵ Chapter one explored how the Western tradition (Protestant and Catholic) has generally followed Augustine over the other Fathers. For example, Calvin cited Augustine more than any other Father. See Oort, "John Calvin and the Church Fathers," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 689. In systematic theology, if the Fathers are utilized at all, Augustine is typically referenced the most. See e.g. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) who utilizes Augustine and Cyprian.

opened the door for Reformed dialogue with both eastern⁴⁶ and western churches.⁴⁷

It is notable that Torrance's critique of Augustine in particular and Augustinian-Latin theology in general is essentially the same as his critique of contemporary Roman Catholicism and Federal Calvinism. Torrance critiques Augustine for dividing God from his Word and the Latin tradition for emphasizing the juridical aspect of the atonement dividing God from Christ.⁴⁸ Torrance also critiques Roman Catholicism and Federal Calvinism for doing the very same.⁴⁹ The overlap is substantial. Here Torrance may be falling into the temptation of

⁴⁶ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*; Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*. The ecumenical point of contact between Torrance and the Orthodox might be more than a theological connection. Orthodox scholars also tend to be strongly allergic to Augustine. See, for example, John Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin; Franks, Romans, Feudalism, and Doctrine* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981); Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, trans. K. Schram (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991); *Orthodox and the West* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006). These Orthodox theologians hold Augustine responsible for "most of what went wrong with the west in the middle ages..." See Aristotle Papanikolaou and George E. Demacopoulos, "Augustine and the Orthodox: 'The West' in the East," in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, eds. Papanikolaou and Demacopoulos, 33 for the quote. Romanides accuses Augustine of having a distorted view of the Fall and Yannaras faults him for not having the essence/energies distinction. Illustrative of this view, Hart states: "The theology of grace of the late Augustine, his increasingly intransigent extremism regarding the creature's 'merit,' his hideous theology of predestination and original guilt, his conviction that genuine trust in the purity and priority of grace obliged him to affirm the eternal damnation of infants who died unbaptized—in short, the entire range of his catastrophic misreading of Paul's theology (attributable only in part to bad Latin translations)—is all very far from what a modern Orthodox Christian is likely to recognize as the Church's faith." See David Bentley Hart, "The Hidden and Manifest: Metaphysics After Nicaea," in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, eds. Papanikolaou and Demacopoulos, 194. Despite this particularly scathing critique in the first pages, Hart is relatively more gracious to Augustine throughout the remainder of his paper.

⁴⁷ See his very appreciative discussion of Karl Rahner's Trinitarian theology and departure from Augustine and return to the Greek tradition. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 77–102. Though Torrance does have his hesitations about the extremely intimate ontological identification between the economic and immanent Trinity in Rahner.

⁴⁸ See e.g. "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 470–479.

⁴⁹ See e.g. *Theology in Reconciliation*, 9–10 and Introduction to *The School of Faith*, xvi–xxi.

Newman before him to amalgamate contemporary debate with ancient theology.⁵⁰

The previous chapter of this thesis explored Torrance's departure from forensic notions of the atonement and a return to the Greek conception of *theosis* and union with Christ. Torrance's critique of Augustine may well be in line with his critique of forensic notions of the atonement in Roman Catholicism and Federal Calvinism.

3.4 The Nicene stream

Sweeping Augustine (or at least the Augustinian tradition) aside, Torrance returns to the Greek Fathers. Accordingly, in the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* the Nicene stream of theology is core. Driving this stream is a shared mindset and methodology consisting of (a) an assumption of the unapproachability of God, (b) the view that it is only by God that God is known, and (c) a view of the dynamic nature of theological terms.⁵¹ All of these arise out of the Nicene *ὁμοούσιον* and the epistemological and soteriological implications therein discussed in chapter two.

Torrance contends that the Council of Nicaea "has a unique place in the history of the Christian Church as 'the Great and Holy Synod.'"⁵² Furthermore, he holds that subsequent Ecumenical Councils⁵³ looked back to Nicaea as their

⁵⁰ Newman saw the liberals of his day as contemporary Arians. See Daley, "The Church Fathers" in Ker and Merrigan, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, 31.

⁵¹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 30.

⁵² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 13.

⁵³ Generally the "Ecumenical Councils" refer to Nicaea (325 C.E.), Constantinople (381 C.E.), Ephesus (429 C.E.), Chalcedon (451 C.E.), Constantinople II (553 C.E.), Constantinople III (681 C.E.), and Nicaea II (787 C.E.). The first four Ecumenical Councils laid out the foundations of Orthodox Christology. The First Council (Nicaea, 325 C.E.) affirmed Christ's full divinity. The Second Council (Constantinople I, 381 C.E.) affirmed Christ's full humanity. The Third Council (Ephesus, 431 C.E.) affirmed the oneness of Christ's person. The Fourth Council (Chalcedon, 451 C.E.) affirmed the duality of Christ's natures. These first four councils laid out the basis of orthodox Christology. The Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils essentially clarified the Third and Fourth Ecumenical Councils. The Fifth Council (Constantinople II, 553 C.E.) affirmed the duality of Christ's natures and clarified

“normative basis.”⁵⁴ Torrance does not explicitly limit the councils to the first four but rather holds to the ecumenicity of the full seven of the Eastern and Western churches; and though he is clearly primarily informed by the councils of Nicaea I, Constantinople I, Ephesus, and Chalcedon in his theology he does positively cite figures working contemporary to the later of the Seven Ecumenical Councils.⁵⁵

However, it is notable that Torrance never explicitly argues for a chronologically driven “golden-age” and he does cite Fathers after the fifth century and thus Florovsky’s critique of Protestants assuming a “pattern of decay” in their reading of church history⁵⁶ cannot be directed at Torrance. He breaks free from this traditional Protestant perspective. Furthermore, his emphasis on the first four ecumenical councils in general and the Council of Nicaea in particular is not because of chronology but rather to the emphasis on the ὁμοούσιον.⁵⁷ The councils

precisely what this did not mean and what it did mean. The Sixth Council (Constantinople III, 680 C.E.) clarified the theology of the duality of Christ’s natures even further. Essentially, the Fifth and Sixth Councils clarified the earlier councils, especially the third and fourth. The Seventh Council (Nicaea II, 787 C.E.) was a very practical council. Here, the proper use of images was affirmed. The Seventh Council clarified what the earlier six councils affirmed by affirming the use of icons. Basically, this council argued that because of the theology that had been propagated at the first six councils, icons were therefore acceptable and good. Thus, the Seventh Council portrayed the practical implications of the earlier six Ecumenical Councils. See Leo D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils, 325–787: Their History and Theology*, (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1992) for further information. Roman Catholics have fourteen more councils which are considered Ecumenical. Traditionally Protestants consider only the first four councils Ecumenical. In the *Institutes*, Calvin considered the Seventh Ecumenical Council to have fallen into idolatry. See *Institutes*, 1.11. Calvin considered the first four councils to be ecumenical but that soon after the church began a gradual decline from her “golden-age.” See Lane, *John Calvin: Student of Church Fathers*, 39–40; 46.

⁵⁴ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 13.

⁵⁵ For example, Severus of Antioch and John Philoponus. See the previous chapter. See further Baker, “The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance,” 25.

⁵⁶ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 110

⁵⁷ See e.g. his article “Athanasius: A Study in the Foundations of Classical Theology” in *Theology in Reconciliation*.

and Fathers that were driven by the Word-focused theology were simply more in tune with God and how to speak about God. Thus, Torrance does not emphasize the first four councils for chronologically driven reasons; rather, these figures simply happened to be more in line with the evangelical stream. As noted, other, much later theologians, (e.g. Anselm, Calvin, Kierkegaard, Barth) fit in the stream (albeit only in certain ways).

3.5 The Athanasius-Cyril axis of classical theology

For Torrance the flowering of the *Consensus Patrum* can be found in what he calls the “Athanasius-Cyril axis of classical theology”⁵⁸ and even more so in Athanasius “the foundation of classical theology.”⁵⁹ Torrance sees Athanasius as a pivotal theologian who preserved and propagated a Biblical worldview in a culture that strongly denied all aspects of it.⁶⁰ Torrance is for the most part consistent in his use of Athanasius in that throughout his published work the same themes are discussed in relation to Athanasius and he consistently turns to Athanasius; however, Torrance certainly developed and deepened his understanding of those themes throughout his career. In an early text, *Conflict and Agreement*, Torrance

⁵⁸ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 9.

⁵⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 215–256.

⁶⁰ Torrance’s situating of Athanasius in such a positive light stands out against a generally critical assessment of Athanasius’ character popular during his era. These scholars’ accusation is that Athanasius’ theology was mere propaganda, as his primary intention was the assertion of as much political power as possible. Indeed, for them Athanasius was simply a political thug like many other leaders in late antiquity. Thus, they do not spend much, if any, time in discussion of the saint’s theology. Rather, the focus is typically on his character and actions. D.W.H Arnold provides an excellent summary of the historical critiques of Athanasius in modern times: Forgery, invalid consecration as bishop, and/or use of brutal violence to suppress schism. These critical approaches to Athanasius include: Seeck, Schwartz, Caspar, Setton, Opitz, Schneemelcher, and, to some extent, Hanson. See Duane Arnold, *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 11–13; 181–186.

already had begun to use Athanasius in support of his view of the sacraments⁶¹ and his view that Christ assumed fallen and sinful humanity,⁶² both of which are constant themes in Torrance's later texts, as discussed in the previous chapter.

A number of 19th century scholars stand with Torrance and view Athanasius in a positive light and, as Behr puts it, are "effusive in their praise for Athanasius" such as J.A. Moehler, Newman, J.M. Neale, H.M. Gwatkin, W. Bright, and A. Robertson⁶³ and a number of 20th century scholars such as G. Florovsky, G.D. Dragas, E.D. Moutsoulas, V. Twomey, and R. Person.⁶⁴ Torrance stands in this tradition of viewing Athanasius.

Torrance holds that Athanasius reconstructed the mindset of his time on the basis of a Biblical mindset. Within this worldview, Torrance draws parallels between Athanasius and other thinkers throughout church history. Additionally, Torrance connects Athanasius to a distinct line of thought during the patristic era.

The Torrancian Athanasius stands in the center of classical biblically based theology. Herein, Athanasius stands in a distinct thread of thought, which is rooted in a certain theological method, exegetical method, and positive theology. At his core, the Torrancian Athanasius is a theologian who sought to:

Develop an organic structure in theological understanding of God through discerning the coordination between the concrete pattern taken by the divine condescension in the Incarnation of the Son, and the inherent order of Trinitarian relations in the Godhead, linking them together through the pattern of God's

⁶¹ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: Volume 1*, 74.

⁶² Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: Volume 1*, 149.

⁶³ Behr, *The Nicene Faith: Part I*, 165. See also Arnold, *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria*, 11–23.

⁶⁴ Arnold, *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria*, 21.

interaction with us described in terms of *from (or to) the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit*.⁶⁵

At first glance, it may seem that Torrance orchestrates his notion of the *Consensus Patrum* based upon Athanasius himself; however, it is more deeply rooted than this, for, Torrance's reliance upon Athanasius is because of his view of what is the "core" of the *consensus*, namely the ὁμοούσιον. Based upon this, Athanasius is the theologian who most properly fits in the *consensus* and thus was the exemplar thinker in Torrance's system. Nevertheless, others fit into this system, not based upon how they lined up with Athanasius, but rather how they lined up with this core orthodoxy.

The first aspect of the significance of the Torrancian Athanasius is that he was a highly significant figure because of the theological assertions he affirmed and, conversely, those he denounced. Torrance holds that Athanasius did three main things. First, he rejected dualism, primarily the Origenist and Alexandrian dichotomy of the κόσμος αἰσθητός (*sensible world*) and the κόσμος νοητός (*intelligible world*).⁶⁶ This accusation of Origen of dualism, oft stated by Torrance, was put forward earlier by Gwatkin in the connection of the Arians to Origen in their conception of the δεύτερον θεόν, or "second God."⁶⁷ Second, he rejected the

⁶⁵ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 251.

⁶⁶ Harnack had already articulated the view that Athanasius distanced himself from Origen and some scholars, such as R.L. Wilken, argue that Torrance assumes Harnack's reading of Athanasius and Origen. See Wilken, "Divine Meaning Book Review," 744; Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, 13.

⁶⁷ Henry Melville Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism: Chiefly Referring to the Character and Chronology of the Reaction Which Followed the Council of Nicaea* (Cambridge: D. Bell, 1882), 38. For an example of Origen's use of this concept see Origen, *Contra Celsus* 5.39 (PG 11.1244). Torrance does, however,

Arian notion of thinking, which was not κατὰ φύσιν (*according to nature*) nor κατὰ δianoian (*across from themselves to God*) but rather κατ' ἐπίνοιαν (*out of themselves*) and restored the proper way of doing theology, reading the Bible, and using theological terms, allowing the σκοπός (*mark, goal, end*) to govern.⁶⁸ Third, for Torrance, Athanasius rejected the Stoic doctrine of λόγοι σπερματικοί (*spermatic words*).⁶⁹

Torrance perceives Athanasius as being a distinct thread of thought and theology. Indeed, he sees Athanasius as unique in respects to the culture around him and the general trend of extreme Alexandrian theology, and therein as the foundational thread of orthodox theology.⁷⁰ He sees two extreme camps in the early church, Antioch and Alexandria, which were the root of heretical tendencies, but the “middle stream,” as Torrance sees it, was “Irenaeus to Athanasius to Cyril.”⁷¹ It is this stream that preserved orthodox Christology.⁷² Elsewhere,

offer a fairly positive appraisal of Origen in chapter two of *Trinitarian Faith*. See *The Trinitarian Faith*, 35–41.

⁶⁸ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 48; Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today*, 52. See also *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 5.

⁶⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 217 citing Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 40 where Athanasius clarified concerning his view of the Word that he “spoke not of the seminal [word] (σπερματικόν), which is soulless, reasonless, and without intellect (ἄψυχον ὄντα καὶ μηδὲν λογιζόμενον μήτε νοοῦντα) but rather spoke of the living and powerful self-Word of the good God, the God of the universe (τὸν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ θεοῦ τῶν ὅλων ζῶντα καὶ ἐνεργῇ θεὸν αὐτολόγον).” See PG 25b.80–81 for the full text.

⁷⁰ See especially the chapter entitled “Athanasius: A Study in the Foundations of Classical Theology” in Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 215–266.

⁷¹ Torrance connects Irenaeus on a variety of levels. Chapter two discussed the connection in “scientific theology.” See further Torrance, *Incarnation*, 198.

⁷² Torrance, *Incarnation*, 198.

Torrance emphasizes the “Athanasius-Cyril axis” as central for theological agreement and therein reunification between split denominations.⁷³

Torrance also places Athanasius in the “Episcopal tradition,” which stood alongside but was distinct from the “Catechetical School tradition” of Origen (c.185 C.E.–232 C.E.) and Clement of Alexandria (died c. 215 C.E.). Torrance locates Athanasius as falling in line with the tradition of “the Biblical-theological understanding of the Gospel” of Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 115/125 C.E.–130/142 C.E.), Melito of Sardis (died c. 180 C.E.), Alexander (died c. 326 C.E.), Peter (died c. 311 C.E.), Dionysius of Alexandria (c. 190 C.E.–265 C.E.), and Demetrius (died c. 126 C.E.), all of whom were bound together by their common Hebraic/Biblical worldview.⁷⁴ Torrance distinguishes this from the traditional Alexandrian Catechetical school of Origen and Clement, especially in the realm of Biblical interpretation.⁷⁵ Torrance argues that what fastens all these theologians together is a specific theological methodology, a worldview; therefore, a distinct system of theology which arose.⁷⁶

Combined with Athanasius’ place in the Alexandrian Episcopal tradition is his adoption of Alexandrian scientific method. Torrance holds that Athanasius, following Origen and Clement of Alexandria, adapted the Alexandrian tradition of science into theology and followed the method of the Alexandrian scientific

⁷³ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 9–10.

⁷⁴ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 215.

⁷⁵ Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics*, 229.

⁷⁶ Cf. Newman’s view of the episcopal tradition, which was similar. King argues this was exemplified by Newman in his early period. See Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*; Newman, *Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church, Viewed Relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism*. See also King, *Newman and the Alexandrian Fathers*, 38–46

tradition, ἡ μέθοδος τῆς εὐρέσεως (*heuristic method*).⁷⁷ Therefore, Athanasius had an explicit method of Biblical interpretation and methodology, which in turn affected his entire theology.⁷⁸ Torrance maintains that Athanasius believed that theological language and terms are pointers to the reality they signified for a term “is essentially an operational term in which some image, idea or relation is taken from our this-worldly experience to point beyond itself to what is quite new and so to help us get some kind of grasp upon it.”⁷⁹ In this sense terms are παράδειγμα (*models*) that point “beyond its creaturely form and content to the intended reality (πρὸς ἄλλο τι βλέποντα),” and they provide an “analogic account.”⁸⁰

Theologically, Torrance argues that Athanasian Triadology focuses on the wholeness of the Godhead and viewed each person of the Trinity “in terms of their coinherent and undivided wholeness, in which each person is ‘whole of the whole.’”⁸¹ Torrance believes this is rooted in Athanasius’ method and starting point, namely the doctrine of ὁμοούσιον:

Athanasius’ approach to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity took its start and controlling norm from the revealing and saving acts of God in the ‘incarnate παρουσία’ of his only begotten Son in Jesus Christ, and moved through the ὁμοούσιος τῷ Πατρί to its ultimate ground in the eternal Godhead. The Nicene formulation gave exact expression to the supreme truth of the Gospel that God himself is the content of his revelation and that the Gift which God bestows upon us in his Grace is identical with himself the Giver of the Gift—the point to which Athanasius gave such attention in his doctrine of θεοποίησις.⁸²

⁷⁷ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 216. This is a term that Torrance notices initially in Clement but sees as a part of the Alexandrian scientific-theological tradition in general. See Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 241.

⁷⁸ Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 235–237.

⁷⁹ Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 16.

⁸⁰ See Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 16–17.

⁸¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 238 citing Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, 1.16; 3.1ff; 4.1ff; *Ad Serapion*, 1.16, 26.

⁸² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 304–305.

Thus, Torrance views Athanasius as rooting his Triadology in the oneness of the Godhead, rather than the threeness of the divine persons. This is why Torrance says: “Athanasius actually preferred to speak of God as Μονάς rather than as Ἀρχή, since his understanding of the Μονάς was essentially as the Τριάς.”⁸³ For Torrance this came out the clearest in Athanasius’ understanding of the procession of the Spirit: ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς.⁸⁴

This does not mean that Athanasius did not discuss the plurality. Rather, Torrance simply understands him to have rooted the three persons intrinsically in the one essence and thus, for him, the unity necessarily was the starting point. Torrance sees this Athanasian and Nicene emphasis to have derived from the doctrine of ὁμοούσιον and the implied dynamic nature of God’s essence.

As such, Torrance sees Athanasius’ Triadology, with the Son and Spirit rooted in the Father’s οὐσία not in his ὑπόστασις. Gregg and Groh agree inasmuch as they believe Athanasius emphasized God’s nature over God’s will, both in creation and in the begetting of the Son⁸⁵ and they see the Arian position, on the other hand, focusing on God’s will and the voluntary aspect of creation and begetting.⁸⁶ Thus their reading of Athanasius is similar to Torrance’s. For them, Athanasius’ soteriology focused on union of God and man whereas the Arian’s focus was on the imitation of Christ, the perfect disciple, by other disciples.⁸⁷

⁸³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 313.

⁸⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 236.

⁸⁵ Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh, *Early Arianism* (London: SCM, 1981), 171–176.

⁸⁶ Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, 171–176.

⁸⁷ Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, 161–183.

It is notable that Harnack's view of Arianism and Athanasius is similar to Torrance. Harnack considers Arius to have been a Neo-Platonist *par excellence*.⁸⁸ Furthermore, Harnack sees Arianism as having arisen out of Antiochene theology⁸⁹ and, more mildly, Origen,⁹⁰ a view similar to that of Newman as well.⁹¹ For Rowan Williams, on the other hand, Arius, rather than being an extreme Antiochene in theology, was more Alexandrian.⁹²

Athanasius did not hold centrality alone, however, and Torrance connects Cyril to Athanasius as the "axis" of classical theology.⁹³ In Torrance's mind Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376–444 C.E.) faithfully followed Athanasius in his Triadology. He states: "Upon the Athanasian-Epiphonian basis classical Christian theology developed into its flowering in the great work of Cyril of Alexandria."⁹⁴ This is further evident for Torrance in the sense that Cyril strongly established that God to us is the same as God in himself.⁹⁵

For this reason Torrance holds that Cyril believed the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son ("ἐκ Πατρὸς καὶ Υἱοῦ").⁹⁶ However, Torrance asserts that this does not mean Cyril held to the *filioque* but rather that he bypassed this doctrine entirely.⁹⁷ Torrance feels that Cyril and Athanasius together asserted that

⁸⁸ See Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*, 93–96.

⁸⁹ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 4, 3.

⁹⁰ Harnack, *History of Dogma* vol. 4, 20–21.

⁹¹ Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*, 93–96.

⁹² See Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*, 93–96 for a summary of different views of Arius and Athanasius.

⁹³ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, xiv.

⁹⁴ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 185.

⁹⁵ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 339.

⁹⁶ See Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 338–339 citing Cyril, *MPG* 75.577, 580f & 585; 575–617.

⁹⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 340.

the Spirit, rather than proceeding from the person of the Father, proceeds from the being of the Father.⁹⁸ For Torrance, Cyril of Alexandria was a faithful Athanasian in this sense. The way in which this is evident to Torrance is in Cyril's understanding of the Athanasian concepts of ἐνούσιος λόγος and ἐνούσιος ἐνέργεια,⁹⁹ namely, that God's Word and God's activity are both intrinsic to the οὐσία of God.

3.6 Epiphanius of Salamis, Didymus the Blind, Gregory Nazianzen, and Hilary of Poitiers

Athanasius is thus a highly significant figure for Torrance. He preserved a biblical worldview in the context of a society, both Christian and secular, that explicitly denied this worldview by the means of secular philosophy and Christian heresy. Herein, this Athanasius rejected dualism, the Arian theological method, and Greek philosophical views of God and the world. According to Torrance Cyril faithfully followed him in this; however, also in this thread from the patristic era is Gregory Nazianzen (c. 329–390 C.E.), Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 310–403 C.E.), Didymus the Blind (c. 313–398 C.E.), and Hilary of Poitiers (c. 300–368 C.E.). Though others, such as Hanson,¹⁰⁰ and J.N.D. Kelly¹⁰¹ note some similar connections, for example, Irenaeus, Didymus, and Epiphanius, Torrance's connection to Hilary is a fresh perspective.¹⁰² These figures are connected on the basis of the Triadology that arose from their shared methodological commitment.

⁹⁸ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 192.

⁹⁹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 72 citing *Theology in Reconciliation* 222f, 226ff, 235ff.

¹⁰⁰ Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 633–667.

¹⁰¹ Though Kelly also connects the Cappadocians. See Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 263–264. Kelly also connects Hilary to this group. See p. 269.

¹⁰² Though Hanson makes a similar connection. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 459–507.

Torrance sees in this stream a focus on the dynamic nature of God's οὐσία meaning emphasis on neither unity nor Trinity but unity in Trinity. Torrance garners this Triadological emphasis from an emphasis on the ὁμοούσιον which he sees in the Nicene stream. Torrance connects Cyril to Athanasius via the conception that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (“ἐκ Πατρός καὶ Υἱοῦ”).¹⁰³

Additionally, he connects Epiphanius and Didymus on the basis of their conception that the Son and the Spirit are ἐνυπόστατος (*substantiated/subjectified*) in God.¹⁰⁴ These concepts, for Torrance, preserve the dynamic and personal nature of God's οὐσία. Torrance sees Gregory Nazianzen as following in this stream of thought more than his fellow Cappadocians.¹⁰⁵ Torrance argues that the Council of Constantinople (381 C.E.), though without doubt indebted to the Cappadocians, was actually more Athanasian in its assertion that the Son and the Spirit proceed from the οὐσία of the Father, rather than the ὑπόστασις.¹⁰⁶

Torrance considers Epiphanius of Salamis and Didymus the Blind to be within the *consensus* inasmuch as they followed the basic convictions surrounding the Athanasian-Cyrrilline ὁμοούσιον. Torrance notes that Epiphanius spoke of the Son and the Spirit as ἐνυπόστατος in God, “that is, as having real, objective personal being in God and as coinhering hypostatically in him.”¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, Torrance

¹⁰³ See Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 338–339 citing Cyril, *MPG* 75.577, 580f & 585; 575–617.

¹⁰⁴ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 221 citing Epiphanius, *Anc.*, 5–10, 67, 72, 74, 81; *Haer.*, 57.4f, 62.1ff, 6, 65.1ff. See also *The Trinitarian Faith*, 210 citing Basil, *Epistle.*, 234.1; cf 235.2; 236.1ff; *Con. Eun.*, 2.32. See also *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 189. More on this below.

¹⁰⁵ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 112–113.

¹⁰⁶ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 182. More on this below.

¹⁰⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 221 citing Epiphanius, *Anc.*, 5–10, 67, 72, 74, 81; *Haer.*, 57.4f, 62.1ff, 6, 65.1ff.

points out that Epiphanius spoke of the Holy Spirit as “ἐν μέσῳ (*in the midst*) of the Father and the Son” and as the “σύνδεσμος τῆς Τριάδος (*the bond of the Trinity*).”¹⁰⁸ The significance that Torrance sees in Epiphanius however lies primarily in the fact that he, like Gregory Nazianzen, understood the Son and the Spirit’s “being of the Father and with the Father is beyond beginning and beyond time (ἀνάρχως καὶ ἀχρόνως)”¹⁰⁹ and, as such, not limiting the Μοναρχία to the Person of the Father.¹¹⁰ Indeed, Torrance understands Epiphanius to be Athanasian in that he held that the Spirit comes from the “inner being and life and light of the Holy Trinity.”¹¹¹ Furthermore, he was Athanasian in that “he abhorred any partitive thinking of God either as he is in himself or as he is toward us.”¹¹² Torrance holds that this was tied to Epiphanius’ Spirit-rooted epistemology:

We may know the Spirit of the Father and the Son only as he dwells in us and brings us into the communion of the Holy Trinity. That is to say, our approach to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit must be from his inner ‘*enhyposstatic*’ relation to the triune being of God.¹¹³

Torrance argues that Didymus, like Epiphanius, held to the concept of ἐνυπόστατος.¹¹⁴ Thus Torrance understands Didymus to be arguing for a thread similar to that of Epiphanius and therein Athanasius. Torrance roots this in Didymus’ view that God’s actions to mankind are inherently connected to his being, for “Didymus was clearly critical of a distinction between the energies or

¹⁰⁸ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 328; 222 citing Epiphanius *Anc.*, 4, 7f, 10; *Haer.* 62.4; 74.11.

¹⁰⁹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 222 citing Epiphanius, *Anc.*, 46; *Haer.* 57.4; 62.3; 69.36; 70.8, 73.36; 74.1; 76.6, 21.

¹¹⁰ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 329.

¹¹¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 222.

¹¹² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 222.

¹¹³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 208 citing Epiphanius, *Haer.*, 57.4f; 62.1f, 6; 74.9ff; 72.22; *Anc.*, 5, 10f, 67f, 72, 81.

¹¹⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 223 citing Didymus, *De Trinitate*, 1.16, 26; 26; 2, 1ff, 8, 10; 3.19, 37.

operations of God and the immediate activity of his being, such as was put forward by Basil.”¹¹⁵ For Didymus, as for Epiphanius, the Holy Spirit is ἐνυπόστατος in God “in such a way that in him the Gift and the Giver are identical.”¹¹⁶ Torrance notes that while Didymus usually spoke of the Spirit as proceeding ἐκ τῆς ὑπόστασεως of the Father, he also spoke of the Spirit as proceeding ἐκ τῆς ὑπόστασεως of the Son¹¹⁷ but, Torrance argues, despite that fact that Didymus here diverged from the Athanasian ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς he qualified it by stating that this is to be understood according to the oneness of the Godhead and that Didymus even combined the two concepts.¹¹⁸

When Torrance looks to Gregory Nazianzen he sees a theologian who was much closer to Athanasius than Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. In Torrance’s words:

Gregory Nazianzen was clearly rather worried about the element of Origenist subordinationaism that had cropped up in the Cappadocian doctrine of the Holy Trinity in which he shared with the others in speaking of the Father as ‘greater’ than the Son and the Spirit, while nevertheless trying to do justice to the unity and equality of the three divine persons.¹¹⁹

Torrance holds that Gregory tried to get around Basil’s method by using Athanasian language¹²⁰ and that starting point was the ὁμοούσιον, as it was with Athanasius.¹²¹ Torrance argues that Gregory of Nazianzus was not pleased with the Council of Constantinople I in 381 C.E. and played a role in the creedal language of

¹¹⁵ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 210 citing Basil, *Epistle*, 234.1; cf 235.2; 236.1ff; *Con. Eun.*, 2.32.

¹¹⁶ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 324 citing Didymus, *De Trinitate*, 2.1–3; *De Sp. St.*, 3ff, 16–25; 32–40, 57–61. See also Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 326. See also Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 199.

¹¹⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 324 citing Didymus, *De Trinitate*, 1.15, 18, 26, 36; 2.1ff, 5; 3.3, 5, 38; *De Sp. St.*, 26, 37.

¹¹⁸ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 325 citing Didymus, *De Trinitate*, 2.2; 2.5.

¹¹⁹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 320.

¹²⁰ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 316.

¹²¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 320.

“from the Father,” which Torrance sees as not meaning “from the ὑπόστασις of the Father,” but rather “from the οὐσία of the Father.”¹²² Torrance interprets Gregory as a *via media* between Basil and Athanasius; whose views implied an Athanasian way of viewing the Trinity. Torrance asserts that Gregory upheld the unity of God on the basis of the ἀρχή of the Father, but with an important nuance, the ἀρχή and αἰτία were causes and relations happening beyond time and eternally.¹²³ Torrance understands this as a divergence from the traditional Cappadocian view, as propagated by Basil. Indeed, for Torrance this is more along the lines of Athanasius’ focus on the οὐσία and starting from the ὁμοούσιον.

Torrance also includes Hilary in this stream. Torrance connects Hilary to the Nicene and Athanasian stream in a variety of aspects in addition to the objectivity of theology discussed in the previous chapter. First, Torrance sees Hilary as a propagator of the Irenaean view that God can only be known through himself.¹²⁴ In Torrance’s mind this is a necessary epistemological and theological assertion and was a primary reason why Athanasius felt inclined to define the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί. Another connection Torrance makes is via Augustine. Torrance asserts that Calvin adopted the Triadology of Augustine, who despite a lack of knowledge of the Greek language, was steeped in Greek patristic

¹²² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 245–246.

¹²³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 239.

¹²⁴ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 10. See also Torrance, *Theological Science*, 20 for Hilary's view of terminology.

theology because of the influence of Hilary on his theology.¹²⁵ Thus, according to Torrance, Hilary acted as a conduit bringing Greek patristic theology to the west.

3.7 The Cappadocian distinction

Torrance does not return to the Greek Fathers without distinction, however. He finds a divergence from the *consensus* in certain aspects of the Cappadocian tradition; a divergence Torrance sees magnified in the later Byzantine and Eastern Orthodox tradition. Any divergence, however, means for Torrance a subtraction from the patristic assertion that because of the ὁμοούσιον humankind has knowledge of God in himself and is truly united to God and saved. In general, Torrance sees these divergences as falling into some sort of theological dualism which cuts off knowledge of and union with God in himself and thus is unfaithful to the meaning of the Nicene ὁμοούσιον.

Torrance's primary problem is with the dual Cappadocian move to (1) make οὐσία refer to the general and ὑπόστασις refer to the particular in God and (2) the securing of the monarchy of the Trinity in the ὑπόστασις. The problem is that this implies some level of subordination in the Trinity, according to Torrance. However, more deeply Torrance takes issue with what he sees as inherent theological dualism in the move. For Torrance this move severs God's economy from God's ontology, which if true means that (a) humankind cannot really know God as he is in himself and (b) humankind cannot really be united to God; two assertions that

¹²⁵ Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 22.

are for Torrance core assertions of orthodoxy and the patristic tradition flowing from the inner meaning of the ὁμοούσιον. In Torrance's words:

The Cappadocian redefinition of *ousia* as a generic concept, with the loss of its concrete sense as being with internal relations, meant that it would be difficult if not impossible for faith to move from the Self-revelation of God in his evangelical acts to what he is inherently *in-himself*.¹²⁶

Furthermore, as Torrance states:

What is at stake here is the need not to surrender the Transcendence and ultimate incomprehensibility of God's eternal Being, and the need to affirm the oneness between the so-called 'economic Trinity' and the 'immanent Trinity', what Eastern theology speaks of as the relation between the 'divine essence' and the 'divine energies'.¹²⁷

It is important to note Torrance does not amalgamate the Cappadocian tradition on these points.¹²⁸ Rather, he sees certain nuances between each of the Cappadocian Fathers as well as in their theology. In general, Torrance is very fond of Basil's Pneumatology and uses his *On the Holy Spirit* frequently.¹²⁹ Torrance even asserts that Basil held to basically the same Pneumatology as Athanasius.¹³⁰ Torrance understands the main Cappadocian development in Triadology to have been the assertion of μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑπόστασεις. For Torrance this development *could* be understood in an Athanasian sense, which some of the later Fathers in fact did, however Basil of Caesarea introduced a new way of conceiving of οὐσία and ὑπόστασις. Basil held that οὐσία referred to what was "common" or "general" and

¹²⁶ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 32.

¹²⁷ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 119.

¹²⁸ Indeed Torrance cites Basil frequently and refers to him positively often throughout *Trinitarian Faith*, *Theology in Reconciliation*, and *Theology in Reconstruction*.

¹²⁹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 218.

¹³⁰ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 217. Though, there was development in Torrance's view on this point. See below.

ὑπόστασις to the particular.¹³¹ Torrance argues that Basil did in fact agree with the Athanasian concept of coinherence, however, he believes that Basil's view is distinct from Athanasius inasmuch as he equated οὐσία with φύσις, taking away its dynamic meaning and giving it a more abstract one.¹³²

In their theology the Cappadocians tried to combat the accusation that worship of a Trinitarian God implied tritheism. In order to do so they attempted to root the unity of God in the ἀρχή and αἰτία, though, Torrance points out, the Cappadocians understood the Son and the Spirit to be eternally caused without any separation between cause and effect.¹³³ Torrance notes that Athanasius and Dionysius of Alexandria had earlier propagated a similar idea. However, the difference is that the Cappadocian' generic view of οὐσία led them "to say that the Son and the Spirit owe their being (τό εἶναι) to the *Person* (ὑπόστασις) or (πρόσωπον) of the Father."¹³⁴ Thus for Basil the Spirit proceeds from the ὑπόστασις τοῦ Πατρὸς rather than ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς as for Athanasius and Cyril. Indeed, in Torrance's words, "the main thrust of the Cappadocian teaching...was to make the first Person of the Trinity or the ὑπόστασις of the Father the sole Principle or Cause or Source of Deity (ἀρχή, αἰτία, πηγὴ Θεότητος)."¹³⁵

Torrance takes issue with the fact that the Cappadocians distinguished between οὐσία as a generic and ὑπόστασις as particular because this changed the

¹³¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 218–219 citing Basil, *Epistle*, 214.4; 236.6.

¹³² Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 316–317. Athanasius held to a more dynamic view of οὐσία according to Torrance.

¹³³ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 317 citing Gregory/Basil, *Contra Eunomius*, 1.25; 2.12; 3.1; *Homily* 24.4.

¹³⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 318.

¹³⁵ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 241.

earlier approach from “ὁμοούσιον as the key to the identity of the Holy Trinity, to an emphasis on the ὑποστάσεις.”¹³⁶ Torrance also critiques the Cappadocian view that the Father is the sole ἀρχὴ αἰτία, or πηγὴ Θεότητος. For, he argues, Athanasius held that this concept was actually Arian.¹³⁷ Torrance argues that the Athanasian concept of the Son as “ὁλος Θεός” necessarily implies that the Son, and not solely the Father, must be ἀρχή of the Trinity.¹³⁸ However, Torrance’s main issue with the Cappadocian development in Triadological terminology is, if they were right, it would be impossible to know God in himself, which would be a direct contradiction to the ὁμοούσιον.¹³⁹

Torrance understands this distinction from Athanasius to be rooted in Basil’s difference in approach, namely from Origenistic “spiritual and moral convictions” as opposed to the Athanasian soteriological and ontological approach.¹⁴⁰ Basil’s basic approach, then, contrasts with that of Athanasius for Torrance holds that Athanasius believed the Son and Spirit proceed ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς.

According to Torrance, the “Cappadocian distinction” opened the door to a trajectory that divided the essence and energies of God. This trajectory, argues

¹³⁶ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 241.

¹³⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 241 citing Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 16.

¹³⁸ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 80 citing Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, 3.6; 4.1. Torrance puts it: “The Cappadocian attempt to redefine οὐσία as a generic concept, with the loss of its concrete sense as being with internal relations, meant that it would be difficult if not impossible for theology to move from the self-revelation of God in his evangelical acts to what he is inherently *in-himself*. If God’s Word and act are not inherent (ἐνούσιοι) in his being or οὐσία, as Athanasius insisted, then we cannot relate what God is toward us in his saving revelation and activity to what he is *in-himself*, or vice versa.”

¹³⁹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 246.

¹⁴⁰ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 313.

Torrance citing Didymus, damages the reality of God's immediate presence with humankind.¹⁴¹ It is a basic theological dualism that Torrance sees in much of later Byzantine and Eastern Orthodox theology; in reaction to this Torrance wants to preserve a more Athanasian conception.

Torrance holds that Cappadocian theology, led primarily by Basil of Caesarea, was generally orthodox despite key distinctions from Athanasian theology. For Torrance these differences are highly problematic because they brought, at least by implication, a dualism into Triadology which was entirely outside the bounds of the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον and its attack on theological dualism.

It is notable that Torrance's writings on the Cappadocian distinction develop throughout his life. In the 1960s, Torrance voices hesitation about the ascetical slant of Basil's pneumatology as opposed to what he saw as the more Athanasian Christological emphasis.¹⁴² It is notable that during his writings from this era Torrance does not discuss his later emphasis on the procession of the Holy Spirit from the οὐσία of the Father nor the "Cappadocian distinction" as such. By the 1970s Torrance begins to discuss what he sees as a division between God's essence and energies in the Cappadocians and later Byzantine theology, particularly John of Damascus.¹⁴³ However, Torrance still has yet to produce a full-fledged critique of the Cappadocian distinction. It is only by the 1980s and in *Trinitarian Faith* as well

¹⁴¹ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 210.

¹⁴² Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 219; 224.

¹⁴³ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 252.

as Torrance's immense work in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue that his strong aversion to the Cappadocian distinction emerges and a full-fledged critique of it becomes prevalent.

There are a plethora of reasons why Torrance's view may have developed as such. Most likely it is because of the fact that Torrance's aversion to the Cappadocian distinction is really more about the 1980s than the 380s. By the time of the publication of *Trinitarian Faith* Torrance was deep in an ongoing heated debate with his one-time assistant at New College, John Zizioulas, who is now the Metropolitan of Pergamon.

Zizioulas sees in the Fathers a distinction between substance and will. He views this as Athanasian to the core. In fact, he holds this was an important break that Athanasius made with Origen and Greek philosophic thought. For, it preserves the important assertion that the Son's being, attributed to substance, was different than the world's being, attributed to will.¹⁴⁴ Therefore Zizioulas has serious issue with being preceding person either logically or ontologically in God. For him this inhibits God's freedom to be. Rather, God's being must be rooted in a specific person, which Zizioulas sees as occurring in the person of the Father.¹⁴⁵ The primary difference between Torrance and Zizioulas is that Zizioulas, contra Torrance, feels the need to emphasize the Father as ἀρχή of the Son and the Spirit.

Zizioulas perceives major problems with the traditional Western view starting with God's being in the abstract and moving to his persons, a conviction

¹⁴⁴ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 83.

¹⁴⁵ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 33–49, especially 34.

which Torrance shares with him.¹⁴⁶ However, whereas Torrance combats this by returning to what he sees as the Athanasian commitment to God's being as being in internal relations, Zizioulas sees this as equally problematic. For him, Torrance does not get around the problem of an impersonal being of God by this; rather it simply exacerbates and convolutes the already existing Western problem making relations themselves the primary being in God.¹⁴⁷

Orthodox scholars, such as Lossky, see the procession of the Spirit from the Person of the Father as a core theological assertion found in incipient forms in Athanasius.¹⁴⁸ Another Orthodox theologian, John Meyendorff, traces this view back to Athanasius as well. Meyendorff holds that Athanasius believed in a sharp distinction between essence and energy in God. In Meyendorff's words:

The notion of creation, as expressed by Athanasius, leads to a distinction in God between his transcendent essence and his properties such as "power" or "goodness," which expresses his existence and action *ad extra*, not his essence.¹⁴⁹

Meyendorff explicates the opinion that what would later be called "Palamism" is in fact precisely the theology Athanasius espoused concerning the distinction between γεννάω (*begetting*) and γενάω (*creating*).¹⁵⁰ Thus, Torrance's oft quoted Athanasian phrase "it would be more pious (εὐσεβέτερον) and true (ἀλεθές) to signify (σημμαίνειν) God from the Son (ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ) and call him Father, than to name (ὀνομάζειν) God from his works alone and call him unoriginate

¹⁴⁶ See Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God* for Torrance's deepest exploration of his view that God's being is dynamic being in internal relations and not static being in the abstract.

¹⁴⁷ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 134–137, especially 134 and 136.

¹⁴⁸ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 57–58; 62.

¹⁴⁹ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 130.

¹⁵⁰ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 131–132.

(ἀγέννητον)”¹⁵¹ was used by Meyendorff to portray Athanasius’ distinction between οὐσία and ἐνέργεια (*energy*). Meyendorff sees this distinction as being especially important in the context of deification.¹⁵² Thus, Palamas’ formulation of what Meyendorff holds to be an Athanasian distinction of the three elements of God: Essence, energy, and the three hypostases.¹⁵³

For Torrance, to assert with Zizioulas *et al.* the procession of the Spirit from the person of the Father is to cut behind the economic and immanent Trinity. Torrance does not, however, hold that Athanasius spoke explicitly about the procession of the Spirit. However, the implications of Zizioulas, Gregory Palamas, and the Cappadocians on this implies a denial of the trajectory of Athanasius’ theology and, even more so, the Nicene ὁμοούσιον as Torrance sees it.

Torrance respected Zizioulas as a theologian and therefore does not critique him by name in his writings.¹⁵⁴ However, by reading in between the lines it is clear

¹⁵¹ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 49 citing Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* I.34 and referencing *Contra Arianos*, I.16, 33; *De Decretis*, 31, and Hilary *De Trinitate*, I.17; 3.22; 2.6-8.

¹⁵² Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 186.

¹⁵³ Meyendorff, *Byzantine theology*, 186 citing PG, 151.1173B. See also Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 187 for further elaboration on the Palamite viewpoint of a threefold distinction between energy, hypostases, and essence. However, see the section on the “Byzantine trajectory” in this chapter. This Palamite threefold tier in God does not necessarily mean what its critics think.

¹⁵⁴ Despite deep theological disagreement, Torrance seems to have respected Zizioulas as a theologian. In correspondence Torrance states of Zizioulas: “Some of us may have differences over the way in which he interprets the Fathers in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity but any disagreement is one that is matched with great respect for his outstanding theological ability and the unusual freshness of his mind which had such a stimulating effect upon his students and academic colleagues in Scotland.” See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 172. Though, there was much controversy “behind the scenes.” See a draft of a letter later sent His All-Holiness Demetrius I, Ecumenical Patriarch written in 1988, where Torrance states: “It was I who brought John Zizioulas to Edinburgh and thus introduced him to our Church and theological life in Great Britain, and have supported him in every way I could. However, when, due I presume to his rather existentialising interpretation of the Greek Fathers, he came to put forward the idea that it is the Person of the Father who is the source of the Divine Being, I felt I could not support him as a proper representative of Orthodox Theology.” See

that Torrance's critique of the "Cappadocian distinction" is a wholehearted critique of John Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocians.¹⁵⁵ Thus, when Torrance presents the "Cappadocians vs. Athanasius" he reveals a significant amount about the debate which was going on between Torrance and Zizioulas; the amount it actually reveals about the fourth century is less certain; as such, perhaps "the Cappadocians vs. Athanasius" might be better delineated "John Zizioulas vs. T.F. Torrance."

These Cappadocian and Athanasian/Nicene streams are unlikely to be as clear-cut as Torrance presents them. Perhaps here, as Morrison argues, Torrance falls too much into the "good guys/bad guys schematization."¹⁵⁶ Many scholars, though perhaps not as militaristically as the Metropolitan of Pergamon himself, hold to Zizioulas' viewpoint that the Cappadocians were faithful Athanasians. For example, Meijering holds a connected viewpoint and believes that Athanasius held that the Father was the origin of the Son, in ὑπόστασις not in οὐσία.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, J.N.D. Kelly holds that the notion of general and particular, which Torrance sees in the Cappadocians and not Athanasius, was present in both camps of theology.¹⁵⁸ Lossky also holds that the ἀρχή of the Trinity is located in the

The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170 for this and further critique of Zizioulas.

¹⁵⁵ Torrance's nephew, Alan Torrance, takes up elements of Torrance's argument and engages Zizioulas directly. See Alan Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An essay on Trinitarian description and human participation, with special reference to volume one of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

¹⁵⁶ Morrison, "The Trinitarian Faith Book Review," 119.

¹⁵⁷ Meijering, *God Being History*, 95–99.

¹⁵⁸ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 265.

ὑπόστασις of the Father¹⁵⁹ and sees the general/particular distinction to have come from Athanasius.¹⁶⁰

Here, Torrance seems to assume much of Harnackian patrology.¹⁶¹ Harnack and other Protestant, mostly German liberal, scholars, contend for a view of the fourth century consisting of the “Old Nicenes” and “New Nicenes”¹⁶² that was, to use Parvis’ words, “ineluctably Hegelian.”¹⁶³ The Old Nicenes were faithful Athanasians emphasizing fluidity of theological terms and focused on God’s presence with humankind. The New Nicenes became more theologically rigid and dogmatic, influenced by Origenist subordinationism in their theological content. It is the Old Nicene group from which Protestants see themselves arising. Though

¹⁵⁹ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 57–58; 62.

¹⁶⁰ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 51.

¹⁶¹ “Harnack read through Hanson.” See Wilken, “*Divine Meaning* Book Review,” 744; Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, 13. See also Baker, “The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance,” 43. Though, as Baker notes, it is “unacknowledged” by Torrance. The main problem with the accusation put forward by Torrance’s critics that he assumes the Harnack thesis, though it does have some merit, is that Torrance’s texts provide no basis for this. Torrance nowhere cites Harnack in his distinction between the Cappadocian stream and the Nicene/Athanasian stream. Therefore, Torrance’s distinction between Athanasius and the Cappadocians may sound like Harnack but there is no empirical textual evidence to point to the possibility that Torrance reached his conclusions on the basis of Harnack; indeed the two do have substantial differences. Torrance, for example, never accuses the Cappadocians of Arianism and he sees significant differences among the Cappadocians themselves. The only existing evidence points to the fact that Torrance arrives at his conclusions on the basis of an indwelling of the primary texts. Once again, his reading of Athanasius and the Cappadocians consists of a reconstruction of their theology around the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον and thus it is through this that he arrives at his Cappadocian/Athanasius division. His problem with the Cappadocian distinction, then, is substantially different from Harnack’s. For, as argued, Torrance’s problem is that the Cappadocians, though orthodox, strayed from the inner meaning of the ὁμοούσιον. Therefore, Torrance’s view merits some consideration. Indeed, Torrance’s severing of Athanasius from the Cappadocians may very well have allowed him to see the Alexandrian saint in a fresh perspective.

¹⁶² Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 4, 80–107.

¹⁶³ Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy 325–345*, 3. Parvis argues that this view was prevalent across 20th century patristic scholarship, however and still affects readings today inasmuch as figures such as Marcellus are brushed over in the focus on Athanasius and Arius. See pp. 3–5.

Torrance does not reference Harnack in this regard, he does seem to assume some elements of this view of the fourth century. Though this view was once a widely accepted scholarly consensus, this is no longer the case and most contend that the fourth century was significantly less simply categorized than this.

The large majority of patristics scholars today consider the Harnackian “Old Nicene vs. New Nicene” division as far too simplistic. Indeed, many not hailing from the Eastern Orthodox tradition conceive of the Cappadocians as faithful Athanasians.¹⁶⁴ The current trend tends to depart from these categories and view Nicene theology in a more synthetic and nuanced fashion than Torrance’s broader categories.¹⁶⁵ Here it seems Torrance assumes and works with the accepted categories of his time, which are now out of fashion.

3.8 The Byzantine trajectory

Torrance argues that the Cappadocian distinction developed into the Byzantine trajectory and sees elements of Basil’s pneumatology opening the door to a trajectory later taken up by Byzantine theologians and modern Eastern Orthodox theology, namely, the distinction between God’s essence and energies.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ For example, J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 263–265. However, there are also some who are similar to Torrance, even Orthodox. See John Behr, *The Nicene Faith: Part I*, 27–28. Behr argues that the Harnackian conception is far too simplified and that the Cappadocians were not subordinationist but that there is merit to his distinction between the two camps.

¹⁶⁵ See e.g. Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011). Ayres says “recent Trinitarian thought has engaged the legacy of Nicaea at the fairly shallow level frequently relying on assumptions about Nicene theology that are historically indefensible and overlooking the wider theological matrices within which particular theologians are situated.” See *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 1.

¹⁶⁶ See Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 38–39, especially footnote 69 on p. 38. Torrance is highly critical of the way in which Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, and Gregory Palamas used the distinction between essence and energies introduced by Basil. Torrance believes they were

According to Torrance's reading, the Cappadocians developed the "one οὐσία, three ὑπόστασεις" conception of the Trinity, which he sees as a positive development in Trinitarian language. However, because of the subsequent charge of tri-theism they developed the concept of the ὑπόστασις of the Father as the ἀρχή of the Trinity, which Torrance sees as a non-Athanasian development taking away from the Spirit as God's full presence to humankind.¹⁶⁷ Torrance argues that the Cappadocian Fathers' emphasis on the distinction between essence and energies in God paved the way for Gregory Palamas to separate God's being and God's acts and thereby making God unknowable in himself in some form of dualism.¹⁶⁸

Torrance argues that the Cappadocian-Palamite essence/energies distinction is inherently dualist and un-Athanasian. However, many scholars, such as Georges Florovsky, who portray Athanasius as asserting this distinction, read Athanasius as propagating the essence and energies distinction.¹⁶⁹ However,

influenced by Pseudo-Dionysius' extreme apophaticism. See also *Theology in Reconciliation*, 252 for a critique of John of Damascus.

¹⁶⁷ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 236–239.

¹⁶⁸ See *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 13–14. Cf. Dorothea Wendebourg, "From the Cappadocian Fathers to Gregory Palamas: The Defeat of Trinitarian Theology," *Studia Patristica* 17.1 (1982): 194–199 whose critique is substantially similar. Wendebourg argues that the Cappadocian Fathers' emphasis on the distinction between essence and energies in God paved the way for Gregory Palamas to undo Trinitarian theology by conceiving of three tiers in God: His οὐσία, ὑπόστασις, and ἐνέργεια and basically make God unknowable in himself. For Palamas, argues Wendebourg, God's activity in the world is only with his energies and thusly neither his ὑπόστασις nor his οὐσία are touched at all by the world, ultimately putting up a wall between God's economy and ontology.

¹⁶⁹ See Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*, 43–78. The argument typically runs that Athanasius' distinction between nature and will in God was a distinction between essence and energies.

Torrance depicts Athanasius and Palamas as intrinsically opposed to one another in basic theology on this point.¹⁷⁰

In her famous paper entitled “From the Cappadocian Fathers to Gregory Palamas: The Defeat of Trinitarian Theology,”¹⁷¹ Dorothea Wendebourg argues that the Cappadocian Fathers’ emphasis on the distinction between essence and energies in God paved the way for Gregory Palamas to essentially undo Trinitarian theology by conceiving of three tiers in God: οὐσία, ὑποστάσεις, and ἐνέργεια, thereby making God unknowable in himself. According to Wendebourg, for Palamas God’s activity in the world is only with his energies and thus neither his ὑπόστασεις nor his οὐσία can be touched by the world, which ultimately puts up a wall between God’s economy and ontology taking away all possible union with and knowledge of God. Wendebourg’s view has been the accepted scholarly consensus on Palamas for the latter half of the 20th century. Therefore, Torrance’s view of Byzantine theology, particularly that of Gregory Palamas, was the assumed view of his time and Torrance seems to work with it himself.

Wendebourg’s critique is more of this neopalamite reading of Gregory Palamas as put forward by Lossky, Romanides, et al. who hold that God’s contact

¹⁷⁰ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 11. In the Reformed-Orthodox Dialogue the Orthodox suggest that Torrance over-absolutizes Athanasius against the Cappadocians. See the Minutes in The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170. Perhaps Torrance’s view was influenced by an untitled manuscript he preserved in his personal collection. See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 198. The author argues that Palamas replaced the Athanasian emphasis on salvation via Christ’s (vicarious) humanity with salvation via God’s uncreated energies. Given this version of Palamism, of course Torrance would have problems.

¹⁷¹ Wendebourg, “From the Cappadocian Fathers to Gregory Palamas: The Defeat of Trinitarian Theology,” 194–199.

with the world was only with his impersonal energies; this is not necessarily the view of Gregory Palamas himself.¹⁷² Baker, an Eastern Orthodox scholar appreciative of Torrance, contends that Torrance's critique is really more of Lossky and other 20th century readings of Gregory Palamas than of Palamas himself, suggesting Palamas might fair better if approached today.¹⁷³

The school of Romanides and Lossky indeed make a very strong distinction between God's essence and God's energies in their efforts at defending a strict apophaticism, following Pseudo-Dionysius. Vladimir Lossky, for example, contends "eastern theology always distinguishes between the gift and the Giver, between uncreated grace and the Person of the Holy Spirit who communicates it."¹⁷⁴ According to Lossky, Palamas' understanding is that in prayer the Christian is united to God's uncreated energies, but these energies are not a part of God as he is in himself.

According to more recent readings of Palamas, following the interpretation of John Meyendorff, for Palamas, God interacts with the world personally.¹⁷⁵ This reading, while still holding to the three-tiered view, holds that "the divine energies are given to us in a hypostatic, i.e., personal, form."¹⁷⁶ Meyendorff states:

¹⁷² Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*; John Romanides, *Outline of Patristic Dogmatics* ed. George Dion Dragas, (Rollinsford: Orthodox Research Institute, 2004).

¹⁷³ Baker, "The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance," 42. This was also the critique of John Zizioulas. See Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 139. He is highly critical of this reading as proffered by Wendebourg.

¹⁷⁴ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 213.

¹⁷⁵ Following his groundbreaking study: John Meyendorff, *Introduction A l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris: Patristica Sorbonensia, 1959). See especially pp. 195–256 and 279–310.

¹⁷⁶ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 139.

The distinction between “essence” and “energy”—that focal point of Palamite theology—is nothing but a way of saying that the transcendent God remains transcendent, as He also communicates Himself to humanity.¹⁷⁷

If this were indeed the case, Torrance would surely have nothing with which to disagree. Accordingly, Zizioulas suggests a reappraisal of Maximus, Palamas, and the Orthodox tradition concerning the essence/energies distinction, a suggestion taken up recently at the *Oxford Patristics Conference* by such Orthodox figureheads as Kallistos Ware and Andrew Louth at the workshop on Maximus the Confessor. The findings will be published in 2013 editions of *Studia Patristica*. Their argument is also that the energies are, for Palamas and Maximus, hypostatic and therefore personal and connected to God as he is in himself.

One wonders what Torrance might have concluded himself had he indwelt Palamas to the same extent as Athanasius and Cyril. There is no textual evidence that he studied these later Fathers as closely as the earlier ones.¹⁷⁸ Torrance does not often deal directly with Maximus or Palamas; he simply argues that the Cappadocian distinction opened the door for the Byzantine trajectory, which he sees in the Orthodox theology of his day. Perhaps he would have less of a problem with the Byzantine theology of this new interpretation. Granted the prevailing

¹⁷⁷ See Meyendorff, Introduction to *Gregory Palamas: The Triads*, trans. Nicholas Gendle and ed. John Meyendorff, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1983), p. 20.

¹⁷⁸ He may have actually done so but his publications leave no indication of an indwelling of Byzantine sources to the same extent he indwelt patristic sources from fourth century. Rather, his interaction with John of Damascus, Maximus the Confessor, and Gregory Palamas, *et al.* usually consists of generalizations and caricatures. Torrance does not refer to them more than a handful of times in either *Trinitarian Faith* or *Christian Doctrine of God*. Rather, his interaction with them is only in his ecumenical work (e.g. published texts such as *Trinitarian Perspectives* and *Dialogue Between Reformed and Orthodox Church Volumes I and II*. The Byzantine tradition and Gregory Palamas in particular do not receive the careful and detailed study that Torrance affords Athanasius, the Cappadocians, and, more generally, the Nicene tradition.

viewpoint in Torrance's time was that of Lossky and Romanides, the critique of Wendebourg and Torrance was valid (i.e. of the prevailing interpretation of his time). Thus, based on the current way in which the Byzantine trajectory had manifested itself, Torrance, on the basis of his patristic reconstruction, realizes the dualist elements and was appropriately apprehensive about the Cappadocian-Byzantine dualist leanings.¹⁷⁹

According to current readings, for Palamas, God's uncreated energies are personal and to be viewed Christo-centrally; without the sharp distinction often attributed to them.¹⁸⁰ Notably, in his defense of the essence/energies distinction, Palamas was countering natural theology much like Torrance.¹⁸¹ Palamas' insistence on knowledge of God and union with God via the divine energies is an insistence upon the divine initiative in salvation and revelation and it was an

¹⁷⁹ In the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue Torrance does suggest that he is mostly apprehensive about Lossky's reading of Palamas (i.e. perhaps not necessarily apprehensive about Palamas himself). See Minutes from the Orthodox Reformed Consultation, Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Chambesey, Geneva, 6–11, March 1983 in The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170.

¹⁸⁰ Palamas uses the example of geometry to show that the distinction of energies is purely linguistic and semantic. He says God's energies are "indivisibly divisible" (ἀδιαρέτως διαρεῖται) and "united divisibly" (συνάπτεται διηρημένως). See Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 81. Palamas applies this to the essence/energies distinction as well and calls the division indivisible. See 68–84. Thus, Torrance's issue with the division of essence from energies could be turned back on him: How can Torrance talk about God's being and God's acts separately? How can Torrance talk about Christ's person and Christ's work separately? This and the previous chapter have explored that Torrance does indeed do this, however he argues that the two are intrinsically connected. Likewise with Palamas' distinction: He discusses the two separately but this is simply a rhetorical tool. The two are ontologically connected but semantically distinguished.

¹⁸¹ Gregory Palamas, *Defense of those who practice hesychasm*, II.3.68. See Jean Meyendorff, *Grégoire Palamas: Défense des saints hésychastes: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1959) for the critical edition of this text and Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, trans. Gendle and ed. Meyendorff, for an English translation of a selection from Meyendorff's critical edition. See also Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 26–29. See Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Saint Gregory Palamas: The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988).

attempt to objectively root knowledge of God and Christo-centrally root salvation. Throughout his writings he asserts God's full and personal presence in each of the energies¹⁸² as well as the Christo-centric¹⁸³ and enhypostatic nature of the energies.¹⁸⁴ Perhaps if Palamas is accorded a place in future evangelical approaches to the Fathers following Torrance, much fruit can be harvested from a grace-centered and Christo-centric reading of this Byzantine saint and the later Byzantine tradition. Meyendorff's reading of Palamas in addition to that of the new school of Palamism would certainly suggest this.¹⁸⁵

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explored how Torrance creatively reconstructs the patristic tradition into a Reformed and evangelical version of the *Consensus Patrum*. By means of his connection of the Greek Fathers to the Reformed evangelical tradition found in Calvin and Barth, Torrance reconstructs the *consensus* into a golden thread running throughout theological history, the "evangelical stream." In Torrance's return to the Greek patristic tradition, he departs from the Augustinian

¹⁸² Gregory Palamas, *Defense of those who practice hesychasm*, III.2.7: "Ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς ὅλον ἐν ἐκάσῃ ὄντα τῶν θεοπρεπῶν ἐνεργειῶν, ἀφ' ἐκάστης ὀνομάζομεν αὐτόν, ἀφ' οὗ διαδείκνται καὶ τὸ πασῶν τούτων ὑπερεξηπῆσθαι." Palamas argues that the energies cannot be divided from one another; each is in each and the whole of the divine energies is in each. Palamas furthermore argues that the energies must be God; otherwise God is not simple but composite. See *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 109ff. Accordingly, Palamas' essence/energies could very well be interpreted as defending the very thing Torrance aims to preserve with the ὁμοούσιον, namely, the strong connection of the immanent and economic Trinity and the fact that in God's being is fully present in God's acts.

¹⁸³ e.g. Gregory Palamas, *Defense of those who practice hesychasm*, III.1.35.

¹⁸⁴ e.g. Palamas speaks of the enhypostatic (ἐνυποστάτως) light, i.e., the light which is really substantiated (has a real existence). Gregory Palamas, *Defense of those who practice hesychasm*, II.3.8. See also III.1.9. Palamas is not talking about the hypostases of the Trinity here, however. See further *The Triads*, trans. Gendle and ed. Meyendorff, 131, endnote 2. However, the implication is that each is substantiated in God's being.

¹⁸⁵ Palamas himself discusses *theosis* effected by grace. See e.g. III.1.27.

tradition and is critical of the Cappadocian and Byzantine tradition, all for their supposed inherent dualism.

Herein Torrance appropriates the Fathers into his own context in a highly creative fashion. His connection of Athanasius to Calvin and Barth and, more generally, his connection of the Fathers to Reformed theology are all very creative. Torrance's most original connections are indeed between the Greek Fathers and the Reformed tradition, particularly Barth, who Torrance sees as the true heir of the Greek Fathers. Torrance's vision of "streams," particularly his vision of the evangelical stream running through the church's history, is highly imaginative. It is to these aspects that modern theology is indebted to Torrance and this part of his thought that must be considered if contemporary scholarship is to gain a grasp on Torrance's unique contribution to patristic scholarship. He creates a plausible narrative of church history which offers a view of the evangelical tradition as inheriting the Greek patristic tradition.

Torrance's emphasis on the first four councils, Nicaea, and the fourth century is, in many regards, typically Protestant and Reformed. Florovsky critiques modern readings of the Fathers for containing an overemphasis on the first five centuries of patristic theology and therefore a failure to look at the theology of Maximus the Confessor.¹⁸⁶ Matthew Baker rightly points out that Torrance rarely cites any patristic figure after Cyril of Alexandria other than Severus of Antioch and

¹⁸⁶ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 111.

John Philoponus.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, for Torrance, while theoretically open to more, practically classical orthodoxy ended with Cyril of Alexandria. For Florovsky (and others from the Eastern Orthodox tradition), Athanasius should be read alongside Maximus and the other Fathers.¹⁸⁸ Thus, for Florovsky it is hermeneutically possible to read Athanasius through the later Fathers; indeed, the *consensus* must be read in this way. Torrance's *Consensus Patrum* is, therefore, highly selective and very Protestant in contrast with Florovsky and the Eastern Orthodox whose entire reading causes them to draw different connections and conclusions than Torrance regarding the fourth century.¹⁸⁹ Chapter one discussed Georges Florovsky's assessment that Protestantism has generally assumed a "process of decay" regarding the tradition. However, chapter one also argued that Florovsky's critique is somewhat of a generalization and could not be applied toward the Reformed approach to which Torrance adheres. Though Torrance does assume the "golden age" notion of Calvin, emphasizing, at least implicitly, the first four centuries over

¹⁸⁷ Baker, "The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance," 25.

¹⁸⁸ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, 113–120.

¹⁸⁹ Torrance does not cite Maximus or Palamas once in *Trinitarian Faith* nor discuss them in *Christian Doctrine of God*. He cites John of Damascus once in *Trinitarian Faith*. Rather, throughout these texts where he explores the classical tradition of theological history Torrance limits himself to primarily Athanasius, Epiphanius, Didymus, the Cappadocians, and Hilary. This is a self-imposed limitation and, no doubt, one has to limit oneself. As such, Torrance cannot be blamed; these two magisterial studies are solid contributions he has made to patristic and theological scholarship. However, the palate he was working with does look selective in comparison with Florovsky and the Orthodox who are indeed open to a much broader tradition. As argued in chapter one, the Orthodox are no less guilty of selectivity (in their case, a certain neopalamite lens through which they read the Fathers). The suggestion here is simply that theologians today assuming Torrance's Reformed evangelical version of the *consensus* need not be as selective as Torrance and thus should consider incorporating the Byzantine and Augustinian traditions as well. See the concluding chapter for elaboration.

the rest of church history. There are others who view church history similarly, albeit in a less developed form than Torrance.¹⁹⁰

In their own reconstruction of patristic theology, John Meyendorff and Georges Florovsky¹⁹¹ contend that patristics studies have been in a “Western captivity” by which they meant the Eastern/Greek Fathers were forced into foreign, Western, categories distorting their theology.¹⁹² They propose a return to the Fathers and adopt the “patristic mind,” articulating patristic theology in a patristic way. This chapter and the preceding chapter have argued that Torrance is largely successful in this regard. His attempt at finding the “inner logic/connection” of the Greek Fathers is precisely an attempt at adopting and expressing the patristic mind, much like Florovsky calls for, and his reconstruction of the Fathers into streams of a *Consensus Patrum* is highly imaginative and fresh. As such Torrance offers a Reformed and evangelical version of Florovsky’s neopatristic synthesis.

However, despite Torrance’s adoption of the Greek patristic mind it is clear that he is still working with some Western categories, perhaps unfairly filtering the Fathers through them or, at least, bringing unfair questions to the Fathers. So, are the categories Torrance organizes the Fathers into legitimate? This chapter has argued that Torrance’s binary opposition can be somewhat simplistic and the

¹⁹⁰ See for example Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* and the magisterial work of Schaff.

¹⁹¹ Florovsky calls it a “neopatristic synthesis.” See the excellent thesis recently written at Durham comparing Florovsky and Lossky: Sauve, “Georges V. Florovsky and Vladimir N. Lossky an exploration, comparison and demonstration of their unique approaches to the neopatristic synthesis.”

¹⁹² Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theologys*, 128. See also Jonathan Sutton and William Peter van den Bercken, “Orthodox Christianity and contemporary Europe : selected papers of the international conference held at the University of Leeds, England, in June 2001” (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 5–6.

current scholarly view is that there is more overlap between the Cappadocian/Byzantine stream and the Athanasius-Cyril evangelical stream than Torrance argues.¹⁹³ This chapter discussed the development of Torrance's view of the Cappadocians and Byzantine theology and argued that though he was always focused upon Athanasius his attack on the Cappadocian/Byzantine stream notably surfaces only after his debate with John Zizioulas. Torrance's amalgamation of contemporary theological debate with patristic debate is, perhaps, his greatest strength because it is a way to successfully apply the Fathers today.¹⁹⁴ Torrance has a very dynamic way of using historical texts and he jumps from the fourth century to the 16th century to the 20th century, often in one sentence.¹⁹⁵ He uses fifth century heresies to critique much later theological problems.¹⁹⁶ This can be an extremely helpful application of the Fathers to contemporary problems and a successful attempt at a neopatristic synthesis; yet it can also be highly confusing.¹⁹⁷ For example, Torrance's discussion of the "Cappadocian distinction," particularly in regards to the procession of the Holy Spirit, is more about the 1980s than the 380s and his issue is more with John Zizioulas than the Cappadocians. Occasionally, Torrance's presentation of Basil and the Cappadocian distinction looks far too

¹⁹³ See also Morrison, "*The Trinitarian Faith* Book Review," 119.

¹⁹⁴ Torrance states that theology must seek to "rethink and reformulate the essential dogmas of the Christian Church in the mode and idiom of our own day..." See *Theology in Reconciliation*, 12.

¹⁹⁵ See e.g. Torrance, *Space, Time, and Incarnation* where he does this a lot.

¹⁹⁶ For example "Nestorian type dualism" in Calvinist thought. See Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 5.

¹⁹⁷ Newman did this with Athanasius many years earlier. Torrance is prone to the same temptation as Newman, namely, amalgamating contemporary debates with historical ones. See Daley, "The Church Fathers," in *Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, eds. Ker and Merrigan, 31 for a critique of Newman in this regard. See e.g. Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," where Arianism and liberalism are compared.

much like John Zizioulas, without reference to John Zizioulas himself. Ultimately, Torrance's imaginative construction of the different streams, while indebted to earlier views in some cases and holding some unmentioned details in between the lines, is highly original and imaginative and ultimately a helpful (if occasionally simplistic) genealogy of church history.¹⁹⁸ If Torrance's project is approached with knowledge of what he is attempting to do the above issues become less problematic. Yet, perhaps Torrance's lines would have been less binary and his appropriation of the Fathers would have included more Byzantine theology if he had not mingled contemporary and patristic theology in this way.

However, overall, Torrance's reconstruction of the Fathers into his Reformed evangelical version of the *consensus* has many gains. Both this and the preceding chapter have discussed Torrance's unique approach to the patristic tradition. As this chapter has argued, this primarily entails a departure from the Augustinian emphasis, which makes Torrance unique among western and Protestant theologians. This chapter argued that Torrance presents the Greek Fathers as the "inheritance" of Protestants, evangelicals, and Reformed as much (if not more so) as they are the inheritance of Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. Torrance paints the evangelical tradition as in line with classical Christianity, particularly the theology of the Greek Fathers. This provides an excellent guide for further evangelical appropriation and furthermore, a bridge for ecumenical

¹⁹⁸ Torrance tends towards a very black and white view of theological history; good guys versus bad guys, evangelicals versus dualists, Athanasius versus Gregory Palamas. Torrance's distinctions can be very helpful and insightful but, sometimes, overly simplistic. See a critique in this vein by Morrison, "The Trinitarian Faith Book Review," 119.

dialogue. Torrance's approach is even more unique among Reformed theologians inasmuch as Torrance departs from the typical Reformed emphasis on Reformed confessions and figures and returns to the catholic themes discussed in the last chapter and the figures discussed in this chapter.¹⁹⁹

Chapter one argued that, while not rejecting the Greek Fathers, the Protestant Reformers and the subsequent Protestant tradition emphasize Augustine and Augustinian theological themes. Typically Reformed and evangelical theology emphasizes these as well, furthermore emphasizing Reformed and evangelical creeds and confessions.²⁰⁰ Torrance departs from this tradition and returns to the ecumenical Greek patristic tradition while reading it from his Reformed evangelical perspective. Accordingly, while evangelicals typically point to their rootedness in the early church evidenced in Augustine, Torrance shows that the evangelical tradition is more deeply rooted in the ancient tradition than this portraying that the evangelical tradition is in line with Irenaeus, Athanasius, Didymus, Epiphanius, Hilary, Cyril and the many theological themes they emphasized.

Torrance's vision helpfully elaborates upon Calvin's reading of the church Fathers inasmuch as he clarified the "golden age" concept and explores the way in which the mindset of the golden age continues into contemporary times. The

¹⁹⁹ Torrance does not, however, reject Reformed confessions (though he does often critique the Westminster Catechism). He rather returns to the theology behind the catechisms and finds this in catholic themes and figures. See Torrance, Introduction to *The School of Faith* for a very appreciative introduction to Reformed confessions. Torrance's commitment to the Reformed evangelical tradition was explored in chapter one.

²⁰⁰ A look at the subjects typically studied by almost any Reformed evangelical theologian would portray this as the case. See, e.g., McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (on justification).

precedence for this in the Reformed and Protestant tradition has been discussed and, as argued, Torrance's reading of the Reformed tradition (especially Barth) as the heir to Greek patristic tradition is similar to the method applied by Calvin and the later Reformed in their polemics against the Roman Catholics, namely, seeing the Protestant tradition as the true continuation of classical Christianity. One might question whether Torrance, therefore, brings unfair presuppositions to the Fathers. However, it is impossible to not bring presuppositions to a reading of the Fathers and every tradition attempting to read the Fathers does so.²⁰¹ Torrance rightly sees overlap between Reformed and Greek patristic theology and interprets them in light of one another from his Christological and evangelical perspective. Thus, his reading is a good *Reformed evangelical* reading of the Greek Fathers, which, as argued in both chapter two and this chapter, brings a fresh perspective and sheds fresh light on the Fathers extraditing them from traditional interpretations.

Torrance's appropriation of the Fathers is in line with the Reformation inasmuch as he, like the Reformers, sees the contemporary evangelical church in line with the evangelical stream of patristic theology. Torrance portrays that evangelicals today can not only return to the Fathers because they are not the "property" of Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox but that, in fact, there was an evangelical stream in the early church to which contemporary evangelicalism is

²⁰¹ As argued in chapter one, Newman read later the Greek Fathers through later Roman Catholic development, Roman Catholics read the Fathers through Aquinas, the Eastern Orthodox read the Greek Fathers through Gregory Palamas and the essence and energies distinction, and the liberal tradition reads the Greek Fathers through the lens "kernel and chaff."

more faithful to than other traditions.²⁰² Furthermore, Torrance explores what a contemporary evangelical reading of historical theology ought to look like (focus on Christology, the *ὁμοούσιον*, and grace) and his ecumenical work depicts the wide-ranging significance of such an approach.²⁰³ Primarily, he shows that evangelicals can (and should) remain in their own tradition but work towards ecumenical rapprochement on the basis of the evangelical theology of the early church which continued through the medieval period and was preserved by the Reformers continuing in evangelical churches to this day. As such, Torrance's theological and evangelical appropriation of the Fathers provides and continues relevant guide for this reading of theological history.

Furthermore, Torrance's *consensus* is a proposal for a return not simply to some sort of general "Tradition"²⁰⁴ but the classical tradition of the Trinity and Christology.²⁰⁵ This approach is helpful inasmuch as it provides a significantly

²⁰² It should be noted that this approach is not entirely unique to Torrance. As argued in chapter one, Philip Schaff, for example, appropriated the Fathers similarly and his translations and compilations of the Fathers as well as his work in historical theology has been very influential in Protestant evangelical circles. See Webber and Bloesch, eds. *The Orthodox Evangelicals*, 47–48. The approach of Swete was also in this vein. See Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*.

²⁰³ See the following chapter.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Thomas Oden, D.H. Williams, and others who propose a return simply to the "Tradition" tend to cast their nets extremely wide. For example, Oden's list of paleo-orthodox writers found at the end of one of his earlier books. Oden noted that this is a much bigger list than in his "Agenda for Theology" in 1979 when he listed Pannenberg, von Balthasar, and Congar. See Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy: Signs of New Life in Christianity*, 165–166. The problem with a simple return to the general "Tradition" is indeed that there is no such thing and thus the list of people returning to it can be huge (as Oden's was). Torrance and others who return to the classical evangelical tradition of Trinity and Christology offer a more "objective" method which allows differentiation between different traditions in the history of the church. The problem with the approach of Oden is that the list of relevant authors becomes deceptively long on account of the fact that basically anyone returning to historical sources can be considered "paleo-orthodox" without differentiation.

²⁰⁵ As, for example. Bromiley points out. See Wells and Pinnock, *Toward a Theology for the Future*, 135–140.

more objective method of appropriation than an attempted retrieval of some sort of general and ideal²⁰⁶ “Tradition,” which, as argued in chapter one, is the tendency of many evangelical retrievals of the Fathers.

Torrance’s Christology/grace centered reading of theological history offers a viable template for further appropriation of the Greek Fathers and patristic themes by evangelicals. He has done the groundwork and evangelicals can move forward with his excellent work in the classical tradition²⁰⁷ in hand, prepared for further exploration of the patristic tradition and, more broadly, theological history. A revisiting of some elements (such as Torrance’s negative view of the Cappadocian Fathers and the Byzantine tradition) and an application of his method to themes in which he left room for further exploration (such as asceticism) can therefore take place.²⁰⁸

Torrance is seriously under-utilized by theologians and patrologists alike, albeit with exceptions. Notably, Khaled Anatolios refers to Torrance in his book.²⁰⁹ However, most references to Torrance by scholars are negative. Ernest is critical of Torrance’s approach to the Fathers as a theologian.²¹⁰ Williams, one of the leading figures in current evangelical theologies of retrievals, somewhat critically refers to Torrance’s doctoral thesis written on the Apostolic Fathers, noting Torrance’s

²⁰⁶ In the “Platonic” sense.

²⁰⁷ Explored most fully in *Trinitarian Faith*.

²⁰⁸ See the concluding chapter of this thesis for the beginnings of such an exploration.

²⁰⁹ Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*, 23–24. Here Anatolios cites Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics*, 179. See p. 214 for the endnote citation.

²¹⁰ Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, 13.

distinction of the Apostolic Fathers from Paul on the doctrine of grace.²¹¹ Arguably, many probably do not know what to make of Torrance because he does not fit in the traditional categories. He is not a patrologist proper; so patristics scholars do not utilize him. He is a Reformed theologian but he does not talk about typical Reformed theological themes (and he is actually critical of many versions of them) nor does he only talk about typical Reformed theologians (and he is critical of many schools in Reformed thought), so Reformed theologians do not use him. Instead his books are full of explorations of Greek patristic figures and themes and so Reformed and evangelical theologians tend to avoid his patristic scholarship.²¹²

It is notable that most evangelical attempts at retrieving the Greek Fathers generally do not refer to Torrance either.²¹³ The reason for their turning east has been attributed to a number of reasons including the shift towards holism²¹⁴ and the turn from ahistorical to historical.²¹⁵ However, their retrievals are generally fairly broad. Thus, for them, Torrance is likely too binary in his retrieval as they wish to return to a more holistic and inclusive tradition. Torrance calls for a retrieval of the Greek Fathers over and against the Augustinian tradition and the Nicene tradition over and against the Byzantine tradition. However, these figures call for a holistic retrieval of the entire tradition of the church. For example, Oden's

²¹¹ Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition*, 131–139.

²¹² e.g. Bruce McCormack's criticism that to return to Greek patristic themes, bypassing Reformed confessions, is to no longer be Reformed. See McCormack, "The End of Reformed Theology? The Voice of Karl Barth in the Doctrinal Chaos of the Present" in Alston and Welker, eds., *Reformed Theology*, 52–53.

²¹³ With notable exceptions. See Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 165–166. Oden sees Torrance as an importance figure in the movement.

²¹⁴ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 21.

²¹⁵ Webber, *Younger Evangelicals, The*, 71–82; Oden, *Requiem*.

“Vincentian method of appropriation” calls for *ressourcement* of both eastern and western sources and Webber’s “ancient future faith” does not discriminate between Augustine and the Greek Fathers.²¹⁶ Herein these groups tend towards the numerical notion of the *consensus* to which a reliance on Vincent of Lérins’ statement lends itself and are, herein, closer to the medieval Roman Catholic approach than that of the Reformers.

Robert Webber’s approach contains elements of this static and abstract view of doctrine and the Rule of Faith as well.²¹⁷ These figures tend to not differentiate between an Irenaean approach and Tertullian type approach to the Rule of Faith. Ultimately, they define the *consensus* in a rather static and abstract way looking for some sort of truly numerical agreement amongst the Fathers in addition to reading their own tradition back into the Fathers. In contrast with these more static and abstract approaches, Torrance’s many connections provide an attractive template for Reformed and evangelical theologians. Torrance’s *consensus* is faithful to the Fathers and his own tradition, while at the same time allowing the two mutually inform and reform one another. He provides a viable lens through which evangelicals can read and appropriate the Fathers. He successfully portrays evangelicals as the heir to the Greek Fathers (all the while shedding fresh light on

²¹⁶ Husbands and Greenman, eds., *Ancient Faith for the Church’s Future*, 230–245. See also Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 53–81 and Olson and Hall, *The Trinity*, 31–49. They argue for a doctrine of the Trinity based on Gregory of Nyssa, Athanasius, Ambrose, and Augustine.

²¹⁷ “An authoritative summary of what the church believed and taught.” See Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 183–185. See also Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition*, 62–65 for a similar account. The problem may very well lie in the fact that both these theologians do not differentiate between Irenaeus and Tertullian on this point.

the Fathers). Thus Torrance should be more utilized by patrologists, systematic theologians, and, especially, Reformed and evangelical theologians.

Torrance's many connections and reconstructions in exploration of the connections between Greek patristic and Reformed evangelical theology raise the question as to whether Torrance is fair to the Fathers. One might reasonably ask whether the ὁμοούσιον in the Torrancian *consensus* is indeed the same as the Nicene ὁμοούσιον. Chapter one explored Protestant evangelicals retrieving the Fathers whom have read Western theological themes into the Greek Fathers. Is Torrance doing the same here? Is the Nicene ὁμοούσιον which Torrance emphasizes so heartily really just Barthian theological concepts in the Greek language? Some critique Torrance along these lines. Foremost in the critiques is that Torrance's reading of the Fathers, primarily Athanasius and the ὁμοούσιον, sounds too Barthian.²¹⁸ Colin Gunton puts a related critique forward. He argues that Torrance's reading of the ὁμοούσιον is too Western and sounds more Augustinian than Athanasian.²¹⁹

In Torrance's *Trinitarian Faith* he presents the "inner logic" of the Fathers. This method gives the impression that Torrance may think he understands the

²¹⁸ Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, 17. See also Molnar, *T.F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*, 325 for an account of this critique put forward by Muller.

²¹⁹ Gunton, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 44–52. Gunton wonders whether "the immense stress on the ὁμοούσιον does not run the risk of flattening out the particularities, so that the divine *being* tends to be stressed at the expense of the divine *persons*." He suggests that Torrance's reading of the Greek Fathers was perhaps more Western, Latin, and Augustinian than Greek patristic. See pp. 50–51. Torrance does explicitly connect the ὁμοούσιον and Karl Barth's close identification of the being and acts of God. See *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 120 and 149 where Torrance refers to Athanasius *Contra Arianos* 2.2 and Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II.1, pp. 257ff.

Fathers better than they understood themselves.²²⁰ Many of Torrance's commentators are critical of him in this regard and proffer views that the Fathers are effectively mouthpieces for Torrance's theology and that his Athanasius is, rather than being an actual representation of the saint, some sort of construction of Torrance's pen. This is a critique Duncan Rankin²²¹ and John Morrison put forward.²²² Many contend that in an effort to adapt patristic theology to his own situation Torrance uses and molds patristic theology in such a way that the Fathers would not have recognized it. Some contend that Torrance misquotes or misrepresents the Fathers by making them espouse a theology that they never clearly articulated.²²³

Therefore, though in his use of the ὁμοούσιον Torrance sees himself as returning to patristic Christology and Triadology, the question remains as to whether in the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* Torrance presents his readers primarily with the Fathers themselves or, in fact, more with Torrance and Barth. Was the Triadology and Christology with which readers are presented by Torrance truly patristic? Or, was it indeed more Torrancian than anything else?

²²⁰ See e.g. Torrance, *Incarnation*, 62. Robert Walker helpfully footnotes that this is Torrance's discussion of the "implications" of patristic theology. Problems arise, however, inasmuch as Torrance states the implications (in his view) of patristic theology in language that implies the Fathers were abundantly clear in their assertions, when in fact there are diverging opinions on many issues.

²²¹ Rankin, "Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T.F. Torrance," 268.

²²² Morrison, "The Trinitarian Faith Book Review."

²²³ Copan, "The Christian Doctrine of God Book Review," 248.

Stephen Holmes puts forward this critique of many contemporary “recoveries” of Trinitarian theology.²²⁴ Holmes’ contention is that modern Trinitarian theology, most of which claims to be returning to the patristic (often Greek) doctrine of God, is in actual fact unfaithful to the Fathers.²²⁵ Holmes suggests that contemporary attempts at the retrieval of classical patristic Trinitarian theology, though laudable in some regards, have been largely unsuccessful at retrieving the Fathers. According to Holmes, while ostensibly “patristic” they are not actually faithful to the Fathers.²²⁶ Holmes concludes that many contemporary Trinitarian theologians, though desiring in many ways to return to the Fathers, construct something rather foreign to them. Holmes’ stated thesis, in short, is that 20th century Trinitarian revival, while ostensibly patristic, in fact has more to do with the preconceptions and commitments of the 20th century figures leading the “revival” and less to do with classical (i.e. patristic, medieval,

²²⁴ See Stephen R. Holmes, *The Holy Trinity: Understanding God’s Life* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2011). Notably Holmes is not critical of Torrance. In fact, he only refers to Torrance once in the book and this is on Calvin on the Trinity. See p. 169. Holmes is mainly critical of “social Trinitarian” accounts of the Fathers and argues that they filter their own viewpoints back into the Fathers. As such his critique is, in a sense, of those who are typically critical of Torrance such as Colin Gunton who critiques Torrance for not insisting upon the particularity of the persons of the Trinity. See also Molnar, *T.F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*, 344–345 for a summary of this critique. Molnar rightly deals with this critique by pointing out that Torrance insists upon three persons dynamically substantiated in the being of God.

²²⁵ For example, Barth’s new Trinitarian language, Rahner’s identity between the ontological and economic Trinity, Zizioulas’s stress on the personal, willful, nature of God as Trinity, and Moltmann, Pannenberg, and Jenson’s amalgamation of God’s economy and ontology. See Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, 9ff.

²²⁶ Holmes argues that these attempts are commendable responses to the liberal theology of the 18th and 19th centuries and the insistence on God’s unknowability and basic denial of Trinitarian theology. Thus, their starting point, the intimate connection between economy and ontology is good. However, he contends that they take it too far for, as he concludes, for the Fathers it was important to emphasize God’s simplicity and unknowability in his nature, thus all that can be said about God must be spoken in regard to his hypostases. Holmes argues that the emphasis for the Fathers is upon God mediating himself rather than the Son as mediator and upon inability to speak about the divine nature. See Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, 198–200.

and Reformation) Trinitarian theology.²²⁷ Holmes ends the final chapter of his book with the statement: “We called what we were doing a ‘Trinitarian revival’; future historians might want to ask us why.”²²⁸

In one sense this critique is applicable to Torrance and it must be asserted that, for example, Athanasius’ use of the *ὁμοούσιον* is not exactly the same as Torrance’s²²⁹ and thus Holmes’ critique is semi-applicable here.²³⁰ Thus, these critiques are certainly not unfounded; however, they are also not entirely fair. In a sense, Torrance would have contended that he understands what these Fathers meant and implied better than they did because of his own situation, hundreds of years later standing post-Reformation and post-Barth.²³¹ Historically, this may be unhelpful (and as such Holmes’ critique applies) but theologically it is extremely insightful and constructive (and as such, a critique could very well be directed at Holmes regarding his potential rigidity in his approach to patristic theology); furthermore, Torrance may actually be right. The themes while perhaps not explicitly from the pen of the Fathers in the form Torrance presents them, are indeed fair theological statements to make inasmuch as Torrance reads the Fathers from a dogmatic and Reformed evangelical perspective and unpacks the inner logic behind the classical theology of the Fathers. That is, Torrance, by means of reading

²²⁷ Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, 2.

²²⁸ Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, 200.

²²⁹ As argued earlier in this chapter Torrance applies the *ὁμοούσιον* and other patristic terms much more broadly than the Fathers did themselves.

²³⁰ It is notable that Holmes would perhaps critique Torrance further regarding his close identification of God’s economy and ontology. See e.g. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 7.

²³¹ In this sense there is substantial overlap between Torrance and Newman. Torrance’s *consensus* could very well be viewed as a Reformed version of Newman’s “development of doctrine” discussed in chapter one.

the Fathers in light of the his Reformed evangelical perspective and rooting them Christologically in the ὁμοούσιον, makes connections and asserts the implications of the Fathers' theology which allows deeper understanding of what they meant and their connections to his tradition. In this sense it is not far-fetched to say that Torrance understands the implications of the Fathers better from his point of view of the *Consensus Patrum*.²³² This is because of the fact that the Fathers, according to Torrance, are better understood in light of the Reformation, as explored earlier in this chapter. Ultimately, as argued in the first chapter, all interpreters of the patristic tradition have a lens through which they view the Fathers; the key is to balance historical faithfulness (not putting words into the mouths of the Fathers) with confessional commitment (viewing the Fathers from within one's own tradition). Torrance does this successfully.²³³ His reading of the Nicene Fathers on Trinity and Christology (and the other themes) is a creative Reformed evangelical rendering of the *consensus* which is neither statically Reformed nor statically patristic; rather, it is dynamically Reformed *and* patristic.

In the final analysis then, Torrance is really only able to be critiqued in this regard historically: The Fathers did not explicitly hold to some of the ideas Torrance attributes to them.²³⁴ However, Torrance never places his project in the field of history; rather, it is constructive systematic theology, which ultimately

²³² To put it mathematically: Athanasius + Calvin + Barth > Athanasius. This is the core of Torrance's imaginative reconstruction of Athanasius' theology. This will be discussed further in the following chapter.

²³³ Holmes also does this extremely well in his book. He balances historical faithfulness with theological acumen in a very good way. See especially Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, 56–143.

²³⁴ Christ's assumption of fallen humanity is the biggest one.

makes it a tenable possibility.²³⁵ Torrance uses historical sources and therefore he must be held at least somewhat accountable historically. His lack of clarity regarding what elements are his own interpretations and what is truly patristic can be historically unhelpful at times.

Ultimately, Torrance's reading and imaginative reconstruction of the Fathers around the *ὁμοούσιον* has much to offer. He provides a reading of the Athanasius and the Fathers with which scholars at the forefront of current patristic scholarship (such as Behr and Anatolios) often agree, at least in substance, if not explicitly. Torrance's emphasis on the *ὁμοούσιον* may be influenced by Barthian commitment to God's self-giving in revelation and reconciliation, but if anything this allows Torrance fresh insight into Athanasius and the other Fathers. Torrance sees in Athanasius and the other Fathers on the *ὁμοούσιον* commitment to Barthian views and thus uses this shared mindset to draw out what had not been drawn out before.²³⁶ Torrance's emphasis on the *ὁμοούσιον* and the inner meaning

²³⁵ While Torrance says theology is necessarily "historical" by this he means "historically informed." However, Torrance simply was not a historian; he was a theologian. See Torrance, *Introduction to The School of Faith*, lxvii–lxviii. Interestingly Ernest critiques Torrance for approaching the Fathers as a systematic theologian rather than as a historian. See Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, 13. John Behr, on the other hand, takes issue with patrology becoming a study of the history of late antiquity. See Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 18. Would Ernest have systematic theologians ignore the Fathers? Should they leave the Bible to the biblical scholars as well? This would certainly be problematic. The key, no doubt, is to balance history and theology.

²³⁶ Despite the strong similarities between Barth/Athanasius and Arianism/19th liberal theology, the two surely had their differences. Torrance's greatest strength may have also been his greatest weakness. He made the Fathers highly relevant to his contemporary time by viewing the ways that Athanasius' attack on Arianism overlapped with, for example, his own contemporary battle with liberal theology. However, this was somewhat over simplified simply because Arianism, though similar, was not the same as 19th century liberal theology. See e.g. Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 461–482 where Torrance paints a picture of Athanasius and Barth as all fighting the same perennial battle against dualism. See the concluding chapter of this thesis for elaboration upon this critique. Notably, Brian Daley brings forward a similar critique of Newman's view of

behind it, namely, that revelation and reconciliation come from the side of God, provides fresh insight into the Fathers by paring away patristic theology that did not focus on it and highlighting the classical theology that did.

Torrance's reading of the Fathers on the doctrine of the Trinity, particularly on the *filioque* debate is a fresh insight and his ὁμοούσιον reconstruction allows him this new reading. Torrance's connection of God's being and acts and emphasis on God's immediate presence in Christ sheds further insight in the *filioque* debate. Torrance offers a potential answer to the ongoing debate between "social Trinitarians" and those emphasizing the unity of God.²³⁷ Chapter four will discuss Torrance's immense work in this regard and how he brought about significant rapprochement between Reformed and Orthodox churches on the doctrine of the Trinity.²³⁸ Here Torrance provides insight into the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit. It is highly unfortunate that scholars writing on the subject today do not often discuss Torrance's significance.²³⁹

Athanasius and the Arians. See Daley, "The Church Fathers," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, eds. Ker and Merrigan, 31.

²³⁷ Basically, theologians emphasizing the unity of God and his immediate presence with creation in his economic activity (e.g. Barth and Rahner) and those who emphasize the distinctiveness of the three persons of the Trinity (e.g. Moltmann and Zizioulas). See Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*, 201–203 for a summary of the debate. On p. 203 Noble helpfully summarizes: "In the current climate, opinion appears to be polarized between those who focus on the *unity* of the Trinity and those who focus on the *distinct Persons* of the Trinity; that is, those who focus on the *One* and those who focus on the *Three*."

²³⁸ See Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I* and Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II* particularly the *Agreed Statement*.

²³⁹ See e.g. Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy*. Siecienski wrote a chapter on contemporary discussion and there was no mention of Torrance. Though, of course, some do: Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*.

Gunton's critique that Torrance's Triadology, while ostensibly Greek, is in actual fact Augustinian has merit, and, no doubt, Torrance agrees, at least in part.

Torrance states:

Augustine was said not to know much Greek but there is no doubt that his *De Trinitate*, surely one of the greatest works on theology ever written, is steeped in the teaching of the Greek fathers, which he got to know partly through Hilary who did have a good knowledge of Greek and was well versed in Athanasian and Cappadocian theology.²⁴⁰

The long-held "de Régnon thesis"²⁴¹ which sharply distinguishes between Latin (Augustinian) and Greek (Cappadocian) doctrines of the Trinity is currently falling out of fashion with patristics scholars²⁴² and current scholarship is moving forward seeing Augustine and Latin Triadology in line with Greek (both Athanasian and Cappadocian) Triadology.²⁴³ This is a major part of Holmes' book. He is highly critical of the tendency towards a strong bifurcation of East and West on the Trinity as popularized by the "de Régnon thesis" and he asserts a sort of a seamless garment of the classical and truly ecumenical Christian tradition on the doctrine of the Trinity spanning East and West, Greek and Latin.²⁴⁴ Torrance, though still

²⁴⁰ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 22

²⁴¹ Of the sharp distinction between Greek (Cappadocian) Triadology which focuses on the threeness of the Persons in God and of Latin (Augustinian) Triadology which focuses on the oneness of the Being of God. See Théodore de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*, (Paris : Retaux, 1898).

²⁴² Therein, Gunton's categories (and critiques of Torrance) are somewhat out of date.

²⁴³ Or, at least not necessarily contradictory to one another. See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, particularly pp. 188–221 and 365–383; Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Barnes, "'Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity,'" in *The Trinity*, Davis, Kendall, and O'Collins, eds. Even the Orthodox, though still somewhat critical of Augustine on the Trinity, are beginning to see more similarities than they once did. See Papanikolaou and Demacopoulos, eds., *Orthodox Readings of Augustine* for a collection of essays from a conference exploring this subject.

²⁴⁴ Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, 144–146. Though as Holmes notes, whether de Régnon himself held to the thesis which later had his name has recently been questioned. See *Holy Trinity*, 130 referring to

falling into some now outdated categories (such as Cappadocian vs Nicene) is at the same time a pioneer (and stands along the current reading) in his time inasmuch as he sees Augustine in line with Greek Trinitarian thought.²⁴⁵ As such Torrance's scholarship in this area has much to offer the current Trinitarian conversation and he is seriously under-utilized by patristics scholars and theologians alike on this topic. His doctrine of the Trinity is a resource for the current *via media* for the current Trinitarian debate with his dynamic conception of the Trinity and three hypostases inhering in the one ousia and it offers a compromise between historically contradicting traditions that can be of ecumenical import.²⁴⁶ As Noble states, "Torrance's Trinitarian theology holds out the best hope of combining the concerns for divine Unity with the concerns of the social Trinitarians."²⁴⁷

Torrance's conception of three hypostases inhering in one divine ousia emphasizes the distinctiveness of each hypostasis of the Trinity while not compromising a strong assertion of divine unity. His reading of the Greek Fathers along these lines offers a reading of the patristic tradition along the line of Holmes and the current trajectory, seeing the patristic tradition as fairly integrated and consensual.²⁴⁸

Owing to his portrayal of the Greek Fathers as the inheritance of the Reformed and evangelical tradition, Torrance is able approach other similarly

the recent article of Kristin Hennessy, "An Answer to de Régnon's Accusers: Why We Should Not Speak of 'His' Paradigm," *Harvard Theological Review* 100 (2007): 179–197.

²⁴⁵ In his recent book Noble makes a similar connection, pointing to Augustine as not necessarily absolutely opposed to the Eastern Fathers. See Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*, 215–217.

²⁴⁶ See chapter four. See also Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*, 201–203 for a summary.

²⁴⁷ See Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*, 215 footnote 41.

²⁴⁸ Though, as discussed earlier, Torrance does see certain divergences such as the "Cappadocian distinction."

minded traditions in ecumenical dialogue on the basis of a common heritage in the Greek patristic tradition. The next chapter will discuss the outcome of Torrance's retrieval of the Greek Fathers and his uniqueness and ecumenical relevance, particularly the way in which the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* consisting of catholic themes and figures undergirds his ecumenical work, particularly with the Eastern Orthodox, enabling him to remain evangelical on the one hand yet also ecumenical, on the other hand.²⁴⁹ So, next, this thesis will explore the "fruits" of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum*, the Reformed-Orthodox Dialogue and Torrance's wide-ranging ecumenical work.

²⁴⁹ Torrance believed his book *Trinitarian Faith* was directly relevant to the Reformed-Orthodox Dialogue. See correspondence with His All-Holiness Demetrius I dated February 1988. The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 172.

Chapter 4

The ecumenical relevance of T.F. Torrance's *Consensus Patrum*

It is my plea to the Orthodox that they should resist the temptation to take their main stand today, somewhat one sidedly, on the Cappadocian development from Athanasius, but reconsider the centrality of the Athanasius-Cyril axis on which there can be deep agreement throughout the Eastern Orthodox Churches between the so-called 'Chalcedonian' and 'Monophysite' Churches, as well as between East and West. And it is my plea to the Roman Catholics that a rapprochement be made with Greek patristic understanding of the Trinity and the vicarious humanity of Christ, which is in fact the theology lying behind their own great liturgical renewal, and especially with the non- dualistic theology of Athanasius and Cyril...My plea to Protestants is that they learn to look behind the pluralist society and the fragmented pattern of the Reformation Churches to the 'wholeness' that belongs to the apostolic foundation of the Church in Christ...

Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 9–10.

4.1. Introduction

Torrance's reconstruction of classical patristic theology in light of the evangelical perspective of the Reformation into a Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* is of great ecclesiastical and ecumenical importance. Chapters two and three argued that the Torrancian Reformed evangelical version of the *Consensus Patrum* is centered upon the catholic themes (chapter two) and figures (chapter three), the central theme being the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον and the central figure being Athanasius of Alexandria. Torrance returns to Greek patristic themes and figures emphasizing them instead of Reformed confessions and creeds (as is typical for Reformed and evangelicals) and Augustine and Augustinian themes (as is typical for the Western tradition in general). Currently, as argued in chapter one, the evangelical church is in the midst of a resurgence of interest in the theology of the

early church. This chapter will argue that Torrance's Christocentric, evangelically informed, and ecumenically open reconstruction of the Fathers into the *Consensus Patrum* offers a highly relevant guide for contemporary ecumenical dialogue and retrieval of the classical, especially Greek, Fathers. This is seen especially in light of the other Protestant returns to the theology of the classical Greek Fathers discussed in chapter one who are less objective (e.g. the emerging movement), more rigidly Protestant/Western (e.g. those who read Augustinian theological themes back into the Greek Fathers), or driven by objectivity to some static confession (e.g. those who converted to Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy).

As has been proffered throughout this thesis, Torrance reads and appropriates the church Fathers, especially the classical Greek Fathers, in a unique and imaginative way inasmuch as his reading is Christ-centered on the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον and in light of evangelicalism. As argued in chapter two, in his use of the Fathers Torrance imaginatively reconstructs patristic themes and figures around this core aspect to Nicene theology as he sees it and, as such, the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* is objectively focused on God as revealed in Jesus Christ and informed by the evangelical tenets surrounding this revelation. As submitted in chapter three, because of Torrance's centering of his reading of the Fathers on the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον Torrance's patristic spotlight shines upon the "Athanasius-Cyril axis" and also the surrounding theological thread including such supporters as Irenaeus of Lyons, Gregory Nazianzen, Epiphanius of Salamis, Didymus the Blind and later John Calvin and Karl Barth. As argued in

chapter one, Torrance's project is by no means untraditional as his appropriation and reconstruction of the classical Greek Fathers is traditionally Protestant in many ways and has its precedent in John Calvin and, later, Philip Schaff. However, by means of his focus on the ὁμοούσιον and the Athanasius-Cyril thread of theology, Torrance draws out elements of patristic theology not traditionally garnered from the Fathers and indeed brings a fresh reading and interpretation of the patristic era to the table of historical and systematic theology.

This chapter will argue that the fruit of Torrance's re-reading and imaginative reconstruction of the Fathers is his immense and unique ecumenical work. By means of his returning to catholic themes and figures with Christological objectivity and commitment to evangelical tenets Torrance is able to engage other similarly focused Christian traditions in fruitful theological dialogue bringing about connections not previously existent and additionally further informing his own Reformed tradition as well as those with whom he was in contact, showing how a Reformed evangelical can return to the Greek Fathers while remaining within their own tradition.

4.2 The ecclesiastical and ecumenical fruit of Torrance's retrieval

As seen in chapters two and three, Torrance's use of the Fathers is Reformed. Throughout his discussion of Greek patristic themes and figures Torrance remains faithful to traditional central tenets of Reformed theology, particularly God's providential effectiveness in salvation as well as the Word

centeredness of theological activity and he approached ecumenical dialogue as a Reformed churchman. However, Torrance does not remain statically faithful to Reformed creeds and confessions nor any other external dogmatic construction but objectively re-centers everything upon Christ and the Gospel by means of a stress upon the Nicene-Athanasian *ὁμοούσιον*. As such, in his ecumenical work Torrance remains faithfully Reformed, Protestant, and evangelical while looking at classical themes and figures with an aim towards true dialogue and reform on both sides of the conversation. Torrance's biggest role in ecumenical relations was in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue though he spent time in other realms of the ecumenical conversation as well.

This chapter will examine the fruit of Torrance's return to and retrieval of the Greek Fathers, his ecumenical work, specifically the role played by his imaginative reconstruction of the Fathers around the *ὁμοούσιον*. It will argue that Torrance is unique inasmuch as he remains decidedly Reformed, Protestant, and evangelical but allows the Greek Fathers to inform his tradition; this is done by means of Torrance's Christocentric/evangelical approach and his unique ecclesiological perspective. It will explore the way in which Torrance's objective and Christ-centered reconstruction of the Fathers around the *ὁμοούσιον* sets him apart from other Protestant returns to the Greek Fathers who are less objective in their approach to the patristic era. This chapter will argue that Torrance's unique *ὁμοούσιον* centered retrieval of the Greek Fathers, though open to particular critiques, is an example to be followed by other Protestants and evangelicals who

wish to retrieve the Fathers for their own theological setting for reform and ecumenical dialogue.

This thesis has been exploring the way in which Torrance appropriates the classical Fathers and reconstructs them into a Reformed evangelical version of the *Consensus Patrum*. Torrance, unlike the evangelicals discussed in chapter one who convert after “discovering” the Fathers, remains within his own broadly evangelical tradition, and unlike evangelicals discussed in chapter one who tendentially appropriate the Fathers based on their own subjective reasons, has an objective guiding principle, namely, God in Christ and the Gospel of salvation fully by grace (the ὁμοούσιον); indeed a Christocentric approach to classical Christianity. Torrance produces and paves the way for what could be called an “evangelical patristic theology.”¹ Accordingly, the rest of this chapter shall explore the fruit of Torrance’s return to the Greek Fathers, Torrance’s Reformed evangelical *consensus* arguing this is best illustrated in his vast ecumenical work and, herein, his reform of his own Reformed tradition.

Chapters two and three examined and assessed Torrance’s imaginative reconstruction of the Fathers. This chapter will further explore how Torrance reconstructs the Fathers around the Christological/evangelical perspective of the Reformation (the ὁμοούσιον) in ecumenical dialogue. Torrance’s reconstruction

¹ This same method has been applied to Calvinism by the “Evangelical Calvinists.” See Habets and Grow, eds., *Evangelical Calvinism*. While remaining committed to “evangelicalism,” namely, the Gospel of grace and the centrality of Christ, the Evangelical Calvinists read and, in some cases, reform Calvin. See the concluding chapter of this thesis for a proposal as to what an “evangelical patristic theology” might look like.

allows him fresh insight into the Fathers, and his own tradition. The outcome of this is Torrance's insight into and reformation of his own tradition and other traditions by means of his ecumenicity, as will be explored below. This is based on Torrance's (a) Christ-grace-Trinity (ὁμοούσιον) centered objective reading of classical patristic theology and (b) the catholic themes and figures of the shared tradition which act as points of contact for ecumenical conversation, which allows Torrance to, in many ways, reform the theology of his own tradition as well as others and thus is of great ecumenical significance.

4.3 Torrance's ecumenicity

In Torrance's thorough introduction to his collection of Reformed catechisms, *The School of Faith*,² he contends, "it belongs to the nature of theology to be *catholic*," which he sees as involving both historicity and ecumenicity.³ Torrance believes that theology is inherently "dialogical" meaning that it is conversational, a conversation between God and his people.⁴ Thus, for Torrance, theology is necessarily historical and ecumenical; historical "because it is historical dialogue with God" and ecumenical because "the exposition of theology as hearing of the Word and understanding of the Truth cannot be private to one particular Church."⁵ Therefore, Torrance understands theology to be, by its very nature, catholic, historical, and ecumenical. Indeed, to be otherwise would point to

² Torrance, Introduction to *The School of Faith*, xi–cxxxvi. According to Robert Walker and Tom Noble, two former students of Torrance's, Professor Torrance used to recommend this introduction to his students as preparatory reading for his dogmatics lectures. See Torrance, *Atonement*, lxxxiv.

³ Torrance, Introduction to *The School of Faith*, lxxv.

⁴ Torrance, Introduction to *The School of Faith*, lxxv–lxxvii.

⁵ Torrance, Introduction to *The School of Faith*, lxxvii–lxxviii.

“theology” not being, in fact, real theology. What he means by this shines clear in Torrance’s own contribution to the ecumenical dialogue. Essentially, as will be shown, it means looking at theology’s object, God revealed in Christ, alongside other denominations, which, practically, means doing theology through the theology surrounding the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον focused on the Trinity by means of the help of one its most faithful exponents, Athanasius. As will be seen, this entails the potential critique and reform of Torrance’s own Reformed tradition as well as potential critique and reform of the other partners in the dialogue; albeit, always reforming by means of alignment with Christ.

In many ways Torrance was born into the ecumenical context. He was born to missionary parents in China. His father was Presbyterian and his mother was Anglican and so an ecumenical mentality was likely to have been a part of his daily family life from his genesis.⁶ Additionally, Torrance sees himself within the Scottish evangelical tradition of theology, which he sees in line with classical patristic Christianity through John Calvin.⁷ McGrath’s observation has already been noted how, more generally, British evangelicals tend to see themselves in continuation

⁶ *Itinerarium Mentis In Deum: T.F. Torrance—My Theological Development*. The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Series II, Box 10.

⁷ Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today*, 18–19; Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 83–84; Torrance, ed. *The Mystery of the Lord’s Supper; Sermons on the Sacrament Preached in the Kirk of Edinburgh by Robert Bruce in AD 1589*, 32. Torrance sees Robert Bruce, a minister at St Giles in Edinburgh in the 16th century, as steeped in classical Christian theology. See also Torrance, *Scottish Theology*. Among others, Torrance saw Robert Boyd as following in the Greek patristic tradition. See further his correspondence with George Dragas on this subject. The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 104. Torrance also sees John Forbes of Corse as indebted to the Greek patristic tradition. See Box 178.

with historical Christianity (at least more so than North American evangelicals tend to).⁸

Torrance's actual ecumenical work has been broad and present throughout the majority of his career as both a churchman and theologian. For example, early in his career (in the 1950s and 1960s), Torrance published the two-volume work, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, concerning ecumenical dialogue with Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics on subjects such as theology, ministry, and sacraments.⁹ During his year as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Torrance was ordained "Honorary Protopresbyter" of the Orthodox Archdiocese of Alexandria. During the 1980s and 1990s Torrance led the Reformed side of the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue, and subsequently published two volumes accounting this discussion.¹⁰ While all of these were done on the basis of Torrance's appropriation of classical Christian theology, the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue portrays this the most clearly as his connection and discussion with the Eastern Orthodox was primarily on the basis of the classical Greek Fathers.

Torrance primarily turns to the Orthodox (and not the Roman Catholics) for a plethora of reasons. First and foremost, as shall be explored below, Torrance sees himself within the Western Christian tradition. Ecumenical dialogue for Torrance

⁸ See McGrath, "Trinitarian Theology" in *Where Shall My Wond'ring Soul Begin?*, eds. Noll and Thiemann, 52.

⁹ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: Volume 1*; Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: Volume 2*.

¹⁰ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*; Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*.

does not so much entail dialogue with Roman Catholics¹¹ because he sees his own Reformed evangelical tradition as a part of the same Western tradition of the Catholics.¹² Torrance understands his tradition to have arisen out of and to still be a part of the same Western Christian tradition of which Roman Catholics are also a part.¹³ Therefore, a dialogue with Roman Catholics would have not been significantly different in form¹⁴ from a dialogue between the Reformed and Anglicans.¹⁵ However, Torrance approaches the Orthodox on account of the great gulf that had developed between his own Reformed tradition and the Orthodox tradition. More practically, Torrance approaches the Orthodox on account of a shared love of the Fathers in general and the Greek Fathers in particular. Whereas disagreements do arise between the Reformed and Orthodox on the place of the later Byzantine tradition,¹⁶ Torrance (rightly, as it turns out) sees that the Reformed and the Orthodox share in their love of the classical Greek tradition of Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria and their emphasis on Christology and the Trinity. The last chapter discussed Torrance's departure from Augustine and chapter one discussed the fact that Catholics emphasize Augustine (often through Aquinas). Torrance wants to avoid this typically Western emphasis of which his

¹¹ Though, he does include an article on Rahner and Vatican II in a collection of essays in ecumenical perspective *Trinitarian Perspectives* (pp. 77–102) and he writes about Catholics in his *Forward to Theology in Reconciliation*.

¹² See e.g. Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 3.

¹³ Once again, the overlap between Torrance Schaff on this point is substantial. Schaff, *History of the Church: Reformation A.D. 1517–1530*, 4.

¹⁴ But there would be differences in substance.

¹⁵ Which Torrance does engage. See *Conflict and Agreement I and II*.

¹⁶ See below.

own Reformed tradition is no less guilty and sees this possibility in dialogue with the Orthodox.

According to Colin Gunton, T.F. Torrance's reading of the church Fathers has provided a "reopening of a major historical conversation."¹⁷ Though there had been informal dialogue between the Reformed and Orthodox churches since the mid-twentieth century, the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue formally occurred in 1981, 1983, 1988, and 1990. The impetus for the dialogue came from "deep theological rapport" between Torrance (on the Reformed side) and Methodios (on the Orthodox side) over the understanding of classical Alexandrian theology as represented above all by Athanasius and Cyril.¹⁸

Their goal was to explore the common roots between the two churches on the basis of Apostolic faith and order as explicated in classical Christianity. Accordingly, the doctrines of Triadology and Christology conditioned their conversation throughout. According to the Minutes, in his introductory greeting to the Orthodox patriarchate during their official proposal for dialogue, James McCord, president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches at the time, "stressed how the Reformed feel themselves historically very close to the Orthodox in a common concern for the truth of the Apostolic Faith and for the unity of the Church in that same faith"¹⁹ and Torrance notes how he developed the view, while

¹⁷ Colin Gunton, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Essays Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology*, 51.

¹⁸ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, x.

¹⁹ See the Minutes in The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170.

Moderator, that Orthodox/Reformed dialogue should usefully begin on the doctrine of the Trinity.²⁰

4.4 Torrance's ecumenical use of catholic themes and figures

In his ecumenical work Torrance, in the language of Methodios of Aksum, a leader on the Eastern Orthodox side of the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue, returns to truly catholic themes and figures.²¹ The themes and figures which Torrance returns to were explored in full in chapters two (themes) and three (figures) and, as argued there, are absolutely centered upon the Nicene *ὁμοούσιον* and the Athanasius-Cyril axis of classical theology. Below, the catholic themes and figures to which Torrance returned will be explored in the ecumenical context wherein Torrance uses them, portraying Torrance's ecumenical significance as well as his influence towards reform within his own tradition.

Reformed Catholicity

In the first instance, the basic reason why Torrance sees himself able to enter into ecumenical dialogue is because of the fundamental catholicity of the Reformed tradition. In this regard, Torrance sees the Reformed church as a movement of reform within the greater universal catholic church tethered to the foundation of the Apostolic Faith.

²⁰ See the Minutes in The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170. Chapters two and three explored the centrality of the doctrine for Torrance.

²¹ Methodios' actual words in a letter dated May 19, 1988: "I admire your patristic expressions and your use of catholic terms like *perichoresis*." See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 172.

Torrance sees the Reformed tradition as a movement of reform within the catholic church.²² He states: “The Reformed Church is the Church reformed according to the Word of God so as to restore to it the face of the ancient Catholic and Apostolic Church.”²³ At the very outset of his first *Memorandum* which he presents at the opening of the first session of the dialogue, Torrance articulates that the Reformed Church “does not set out to be a new or another Church but to be a movement of reform within the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ...”²⁴ Torrance understands himself as a part of the Western tradition inheriting the great tradition of the Greek Fathers. For him it is not and should not be unusual for Reformed to look to their rootedness in the Greek patristic tradition. As such, Torrance’s ecclesiology enables him to remain in the Reformed church while also correcting his own tradition from within; this is precisely what he does in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue. Torrance explains that the Reformed Churches have always been guided by “classical Greek theology,” the “great Alexandrian and Cappadocian theologians,” the Augustinian doctrine of grace, and the Triadology of the classical Greek Fathers.²⁵

²² Torrance states: “The Reformation was not a movement to refound the Church, or to found a new Church; for the whole reforming movement would undoubtedly have continued within the Roman Church had it not been for the bigoted and arrogant recalcitrance of its hierarchy, which insisted in binding the movement of the Word and Spirit by the traditions of men and making it of none effect, and when that failed, in throwing it out altogether, just as the early Christians were thrown out of the synagogues and followed with maledictions and anathemas.” See Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: Volume 1*, 77.

²³ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: Volume 1*, 76.

²⁴ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 3.

²⁵ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 4. He sees Calvin particularly indebted to Gregory Nazianzen, in terms of theology. See Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 21–40.

Notably, Torrance elaborates that the Reformed are in line with classical Greek Christianity in more than just basic theology. He contends that the Reformed conception of the “real presence” of Christ in the Eucharist as well as ministry deriving from “Christ himself the Lord and Head of the Church” rather than from the membership of the church is more in line with Greek patristic thought and practice than Latin theology, patristic or medieval.²⁶ According to the Official Minutes of the dialogue, in the ensuing discussion, some of the Orthodox delegates noted with great interest the analogy between Orthodox autocephalous²⁷ churches and Reformed autonomous churches²⁸ which Torrance discusses in his paper.²⁹

Torrance sees the Reformed tradition rooted to the foundation of the Apostolic Faith, albeit with different forms of piety and worship.³⁰ Thus, there are differences between the Reformed and Orthodox; differences in worship practices, differences in prayer practices, and differences in church order among other things. However, Torrance sees a shared commitment to the substance of theology. First,

²⁶ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 4–5.

²⁷ From the Greek αὐτοκεφαλία, self (αὐτο) κεφαλία (heading). It is a type of Orthodox Church not under an Archbishop (e.g. the Cypriot Orthodox Church is an ancient autocephalous church and the Orthodox Church in America is a much newer, receiving its autocephalous status from Moscow in the 20th century).

²⁸ The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170.

²⁹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 10.

³⁰ For Torrance these differences in pietistic practice are not necessarily problematic. His view is not unlike the Lutheran view propagated in the *Formula of Concord* regarding *adiaphora* or “secondary things.” See Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement: Volume 1*, 82 for Torrance’s discussion of the difference between the Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed approaches to *adiaphora*. Torrance sees the Reformed approach as best, approaching *adiaphora* as secondary and always able to be shaped and reformed by “Christological correction.”

Torrance contends that the Reformed tradition adheres to the Apostolic Faith³¹ and practice.³² He holds that the way forward in ecumenicity is a focus on the truly catholic Apostolic Deposit of Faith as well as the Apostolic *kerygma*,³³ indeed the *ὁμοούσιον* and the epistemological and soteriological implications contained therein.

Combined with this commitment to ecumenical theology, Torrance contends that the Reformed tradition, no less than the Orthodox tradition, developed within its own context and “cultural and historical milieu.”³⁴ For Torrance both the Orthodox and Reformed should embrace their own pietistic developments while seeking to return to the theological core that they share with one another. Thus, the Reformed tradition, while being distinctive in many ways was and is rooted, according to Torrance, in Apostolicity and catholicity.³⁵ On this basis the two traditions could hope for rapprochement and theological agreement.

Torrance proposes that the Reformed and Orthodox explore truly catholic themes and figures in order to work towards rapprochement. Accordingly it is to

³¹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 6. He says: “While the Reformed Churches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced catechetical and confessional formulations for the guidance of their life, teaching and proclamation of the Gospel, these were and are held only as ‘secondary standards’ subordinate to the Apostolic Faith as mediated through the New Testament, and to the Catholic doctrine as defined by the Apostles’ and Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creeds.”

³² Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 8–10.

³³ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 91. Torrance says: “The *kerygma* refers not merely to proclamation about Christ but to the Reality proclaimed, Jesus Christ who is personal, actively and savingly at work through the *kerygma*.” As argued, this equals the *ὁμοούσιον* for Torrance. See also Torrance’s discussion on p. 91–107.

³⁴ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 5; 10.

³⁵ According to the Official Minutes, the Orthodox delegates wondered how the Reformed could hold to any doctrine (i.e. from whence came their authority?). The Reformed response pointed to the Reformed emphasis on synodical/conciliar consensus as opposed to mere individualism. See the Minutes in The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170.

the themes and figures discussed in the previous two chapters to which Torrance urges the dialogue to return.

The ὁμοούσιον and the Athanasius-Cyril, Irenaeus, Epiphanius, Didymus contra Cappadocian-Byzantine trajectory

Throughout Torrance's ecumenical work, particularly the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue, Torrance urges for a return to the Athanasius-Cyril stream of classical Greek theology and their strong emphasis on the Nicene ὁμοούσιον contra the Cappadocian-Byzantine trajectory as the means of ecumenical rapprochement.³⁶

Methodologically, Torrance believes that the best approach towards theological and ecumenical dialogue is on the basis of the Trinity, Christology, and Pneumatology; and, on that basis the Eucharist, the church, and the ministry.³⁷ Indeed, this is the approach he proposes in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue. Torrance contends that the best method for discussion and the best approach for agreement is on the basis of Athanasian-Cyrrilline theology³⁸ and the common roots of Alexandrian and Cappadocian theology, as well as the Conciliar Statements which they informed so heavily.³⁹ Torrance reminisced that in the discussions following the papers presented, everyone "kept returning to the need for a dynamic understanding of the living Triune God in the inseparability of his Being and Act,"

³⁶ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 5.

³⁷ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 10.

³⁸ According to the Minutes, in the discussion, Emilianos from the Orthodox side states: "Is not Torrance in danger of over-absolutizing Athanasius in relation to the Cappadocians?" See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170.

³⁹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 11.

or, the ὁμοούσιον.⁴⁰ By means of this realist focus, Torrance thought the Reformed and Orthodox traditions would be able to return to their common fount and “cut behind” the cosmological and epistemological dualism which problematically informed later developments in the Byzantine East and Augustinian West.⁴¹ Such an approach, Torrance thinks, would bring about agreement between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians, Orthodox and Reformed, and Roman Catholics and Evangelicals.⁴² Torrance proposes that all traditions in ecumenical dialogue need to admit, however, that there are elements which they need to “unknow” in their tradition; extra-Apostolic/patristic theological developments, generally cosmologically and epistemologically dualist.⁴³ It is to Athanasian theological realism that Torrance urges everyone to return.

Torrance proposes a return to the Athanasian-Cyrrilline axis of theology.⁴⁴

Torrance sees the Cappadocian development as a move away from the Athanasian

⁴⁰ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, xxiii.

⁴¹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 11.

⁴² Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 10–11.

⁴³ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 5. Torrance lists some of these in his second Memorandum: Nestorian dualism in Calvin’s doctrine of God and soteriology, the Cappadocian dualistic distinction between God’s essence and energies, the Dionysian Neoplatonic distinction between generic and particular substance, dualism in the Byzantine liturgy and the Orthodox understanding of the liturgy in Nicholas Cabasilas, and the dualism of Leonine and Augustinian theology. See pp. 13–18. And, further on he states: “In the general development of the Evangelical Churches...there has been a failure to appreciate adequately the living embodiment of faith and truth in the corporate life and structure of the Church...tensions have developed between Scripture and Confession, or biblicism and confessionalism, in which we find a Tertullian type of approach adopted both toward the Scripture and toward creedal formulations of Christian doctrine. This is very evident in the way in which the *Canons of the Synod of Dordt* or the *Westminster Confession of Faith* have had the effect of reducing the church’s Confession of Faith to systems of doctrinal propositions which are invested with prescriptive authority.” Torrance proposes that these “dualist and legalist” ways of thinking are to continue to be undone by focus on the *kerygma*.

⁴⁴ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 3–13.

focus.⁴⁵ However, Torrance sees in Didymus the Blind⁴⁶ and Epiphanius of Salamis⁴⁷ a return to the Athanasian-Cyrrilline emphasis. The later Byzantine developments are considered dualist in orientation.⁴⁸

As discussed, the objective focus on the ecumenical discussion between the Reformed and Orthodox is the doctrine of the Trinity. Throughout Torrance's ecumenical work his approach to the Trinity was essentially as outlined in chapters two and three, namely, through the Nicene-Constantinopolitan doctrine of ὁμοούσιον. Indeed, this doctrine is an ecumenical lynchpin for Torrance. He contends that the Nicene ὁμοούσιον is a "king-pin" of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed which expresses the core evangelical belief that in Jesus humans are confronted with the very self-giving and self-revealing of God as he is in himself.⁴⁹

Additionally, though the discussion worked with the Cappadocian and Alexandrian Trinitarian formula "mia ousia, treis hypostaseis,"⁵⁰ Torrance still urges his fellow churchmen and theologians to return to a more Athanasian way of approaching the Triadological phrase, namely, through the ὁμοούσιον, and the insistence on the "perfect equality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in each of

⁴⁵ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 13–21.

⁴⁶ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 21–24.

⁴⁷ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 24–32.

⁴⁸ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 35–37.

⁴⁹ Thomas Torrance, *The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed A.D. 381*, xi–xv. Torrance articulates further that in this doctrine theology passes from the economic to the ontological Trinity. See p. xx. The Orthodox agree that this is a lynch-pin. See, e.g., pp.1–15.

⁵⁰ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 79 referring to Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen, Cyril of Alexandria, and John of Damascus.

whom the Godhead is complete.”⁵¹ He often asserts this, as in his dogmatic works (as discussed more fully in chapters two and three) against the Cappadocian and Byzantine bifurcation of God’s οὐσία and ὑπόστασεις and God’s οὐσία and ἐνέργια. For Torrance the ὁμοούσιον was used by the Fathers and should be used as an “exegetical and clarificatory expression.”⁵²

In the ensuing discussion the Official Minutes bring to light a number of points brought forward by both sides in regards to methodology for classical patristic appropriation.⁵³ The Orthodox side mentions the importance of the “line of continuity” for the *Consensus Patrum*. Chrysostomos states: “There is a magisterial element in the weight of tradition.” Torrance responds:

We must be aware of the Apostolic nature of the church, and the obedience of the church to the truth of the Apostles. That is why the Fathers were not infrequently criticized and corrected by the Councils. *We have to note the magisterial authority of the Councils vis-à-vis the Fathers.*⁵⁴

Accordingly, as a method, both the Reformed and Orthodox agreed to move forward with the intention of basing their ecumenical discussion on the doctrine of the Trinity per Torrance’s suggestion.⁵⁵ The subject of authority is subsequently discussed by other figures throughout the dialogue⁵⁶ and throughout the dialogue

⁵¹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 87.

⁵² Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 98.

⁵³ See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170.

⁵⁴ The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170. Italics not in original.

⁵⁵ The Minutes state that Torrance “suggested the group continue to move forward on an objective basis, that is, a focus on the doctrine of the Trinity, the Canon of Truth, most helpfully done working on the basis of original texts, a shared exegesis of certain patristic writings.” See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170.

⁵⁶ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 50–75.

the focus is upon the Trinity as understood by the classical Fathers and the way in which this informs other theological doctrines as well as church, ministry, and the sacraments.

Throughout the dialogue questions often arose concerning whether God interacts with the world primarily by means of his uncreated energies (the Orthodox view) or in Christ (the Reformed view).⁵⁷ Torrance argues that perhaps the essence/energies distinction was taken too seriously because of Vladimir Lossky's reading. Torrance considers stressing the theology of Palamas is unhelpful because of Palamas' Neo-Platonic dualism, a sort of "eastern Augustinianism."⁵⁸

Trinity

Torrance's conversation on the doctrine of the Trinity in the dialogue between Reformed and Orthodox is consistent with his view as discussed in chapters two and three of this thesis. Torrance's strong hesitation about the

⁵⁷ See e.g. the Official Minutes: "Following the presentation of Emilianos' paper on "God's Immutability and Communicability" Chrysostomos brings forward 4 focal points: (1) The relationship of God to mankind through his energy [ἐνέργια], (2) how does God relate himself to space and time?, (3) how does God in his grace come to mankind through the church?, and (4) how do we understand the relationship of a personal God to the person of man?" Following this Torrance states his view that "the paper did not do adequate justice to the central thrust in the thought of Athanasius at the critical point of the relationship between *ousia* [οὐσία] and *energia* [ἐνέργια]. Athanasius did not separate them as in the Cappadocians and later Byzantines. [Georges] Florovsky has shown how the Cappadocians did make the radical separation with their more inflexible Aristotelian outlook but Athanasius rather stressed the co-essentiality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Chrysostomos felt that the Fathers must be viewed as a synthetic whole and thus Athanasius, whom Torrance was referring to, should be read alongside, for example, Maximus the Confessor. See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170.

⁵⁸ The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170. Torrance's issue with the essence/energies distinction is that it ultimately makes God unknowable as he is in himself. Torrance sees this basic dualism asserted in Gregory of Nyssa, John of Damascus, Thomas Aquinas, Peter Lombard, and Gregory Palamas, et al.

Cappadocian practice of speaking of God the Father as αἰτία, πηγή, and ἀρχή is on the basis of its move away from the more Athanasian principle that one can say of the Son everything said of the Father, except “Father.”⁵⁹ He sees this as a formalizing of the more dynamic use of terms by Athanasius.⁶⁰

As discussed in chapters two and three, Torrance feels that, following Athanasius, the doctrine of the Trinity is central⁶¹ and that the only proper place to begin theological reflection on the doctrine of the Trinity was through the Son.⁶² Accordingly, the first two major meetings focused on authority⁶³ and Triadology⁶⁴ and the final meetings focused on the Son and the Spirit⁶⁵ and concluded with the Trinity as well.⁶⁶ Herein Torrance, following Athanasius, insists on the Christological conditioning of Trinitarian discussion.⁶⁷ Torrance contended that Cyril of Alexandria unpacked this basic Athanasian commitment further:

It is highly significant that Cyril of Alexandria turned back to the teaching of Athanasius, rejecting like him all idea of a hierarchy in God, while accepting the Cappadocian formula, *mia ousia, treis hypostaseis*, he eliminated the ambiguity that had arisen, by rejecting the notion of causal relations within the Trinity as quite unbiblical...Here we have the full orthodox doctrine of the *Holy Trinity in one Godhead, One God in three Persons*, in which the Persons are understood as wholly coinhering in one another, as completely coequal and coeternal as well as consubstantial, with one authority, glory, power, will, activity and goodness, and who as such are *one arche*, as Athanasius had claimed.⁶⁸

⁵⁹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 15.

⁶⁰ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 15.

⁶¹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 81f.

⁶² Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 84–85.

⁶³ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 21–75.

⁶⁴ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 79–158.

⁶⁵ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 39–106.

⁶⁶ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, 109–232.

⁶⁷ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 85.

⁶⁸ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 89 citing Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* and Athanasius of Alexandria, *Ad Antiochenos*. Torrance also sees Gregory Nazianzen following in this stream of Trinitarian thought.

For Torrance, the Cappadocians and later Byzantines departed from this insistence and basic commitment. The job of the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue, as he saw it, was to return to this common evangelical foundation and move forward from there.

The outcome of the dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed churches was the “Agreed Statement on the Holy Trinity”⁶⁹ drafted by Torrance and his former student George Dragas (on the Orthodox side). Ultimately, though the Reformed and Orthodox agreed they had differences of approach to Triadology “they insisted that they agree on the content of the doctrine.”⁷⁰ After studying patristic texts such as Athanasius, *Ad Serapionem*, Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, Gregory Nazianzen’s *Theological Orations*, Calvin’s *Institutes* and Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*,⁷¹ and a number of papers presented at the dialogues, they drafted and agreed upon the *Agreed Statement on the Holy Trinity*. The main points of the *Agreed Statement* have to do with: (1) The centrality of God’s revelation of himself as Trinity; (2) the distinctiveness of the three Trinitarian hypostaseis; (3) the view that the order of hypostases in the Trinity begins with the Father who has monarchia; (4) yet the Godhead is undivided and One; (6) the perichoretic mutual indwelling of all members of the Trinity; (7) the affirmation of the formula “mia ousia, treis hypostaseis,” and; (8) the assertion that the doctrine of the Trinity is true and actual and indeed the core of the Apostolic and Catholic Faith. In many ways this

⁶⁹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 219–226; Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 115–122.

⁷⁰ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II*, xxi.

⁷¹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, xxvii.

was a compromise of Torrance's earlier stauncher position resisting any assertion of the sole monarchy of the Father. However, at the core, it is faithful to his position throughout his life.

Holy Spirit and the Filioque

Torrance's approach to Pneumatology and the *filioque* debate in his ecumenical dialogue follows directly from his Trinitarian and Christological discussion and was, indeed, no less tethered upon the Nicene ὁμοούσιον. For Torrance's ecumenical discussion, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit must remain centered upon the doctrine of the Son.

It is in his discussion of the Holy Spirit and *filioque* that Torrance's unique contribution to ecumenical theology is most evident. This comes out clearly in his work in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue and the subsequently published texts surrounding the Dialogue. Torrance sees Athanasius' Triadology and his conception of the procession of the Spirit from the οὐσία of the Father as cutting behind the divisions between East and West on the matter.⁷² According to Torrance's estimate, the Reformed tradition had historically accepted the *filioque* but as a way of saying that the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son and leads us through the Son to the Father.⁷³

When following Athanasius' pneumatology, Torrance understands there to have been three aspects to Athanasius' Pneumatology significant in this sense: (1)

⁷² Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, xi.

⁷³ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 7.

Humankind's knowledge of God as Trinity rests entirely upon God's self-revelation and thus implies a dynamic conception of οὐσία; (2) Athanasius' definition of God as Trinity does not presuppose a precise definition of the relation of God's οὐσία to his ὑπόστασεις; rather it excludes the possibility of a precise definition, and, (3) therefore Athanasius' Triadology cuts behind the problem altogether as it focuses on the dynamic unity of the Godhead.⁷⁴

Ministry

According to Torrance, any legitimate doctrine of ministry must flow from Triadology. Accordingly he applies his "consubstantial Trinitarian focus" discussed above to the ministry of the church in a variety of ways. Indeed, he contends that a hierarchical Triadology and subordinationist Christology lies behind authoritarian ecclesiologies and that the more Athanasian Triadology he is proposing would bring about a significantly different view of ecclesiastical authority and ministry.⁷⁵

Accordingly, Torrance contends that the Reformed tradition always understood ministry as "from above and not from below"⁷⁶ rooted in the one Priesthood of Christ.⁷⁷ Thus, the ministry is never focused, according to Torrance,

⁷⁴ Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 13–20, especially 18–20.

⁷⁵ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, xxv. Basically, less hierarchical and more Presbyterian.

⁷⁶ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 5.

⁷⁷ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 8.

on the human side of things. Indeed, the focus is always upon Christ who is the one “effecting” the ministry.⁷⁸

Torrance applies this Trinitarian conception of ministry and church authority to a reconstruction of the notion of bishops; a reconstruction which Torrance sees as a return to the classical patristic ecclesiastical structure.⁷⁹ In his words:

It became distinctive of the Reformed Church that the *episcopus* was held to be lodged not individually in the persons but corporately in the body of Presbyters i.e. in the Presbytery as a whole. ...the “Bishop” was understood as the presiding Presbyter...the Reformed Church sought to take its pattern of reform from the pattern of the Early Church before the bishop became separated from the presbytery over which he presided...⁸⁰

Torrance works this notion out in full elsewhere⁸¹ and essentially concludes that the ecclesiastical organization most faithful to the classical patristic era is what he terms the “corporate episcopate” and is essentially a combination of Presbyterian and episcopal church structure.⁸² Torrance understands this to be both in line with classic Reformed thinking (e.g. Calvin) but also to have been the way of the patristic church, as discussed above.

⁷⁸ See Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, 13–57. Notably, Torrance also applies to this to the question of women in ministry, concluding that as Christ the effector of ministry and the minister represents or “images” Christ, the sex of the minister makes no difference. See Thomas F. Torrance, *Gospel, Church, and Ministry*, ed. Jock Stein, 216–217.

⁷⁹Cf. John Zizoulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries*, trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001).

⁸⁰ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 9.

⁸¹ Thomas Torrance, *Royal Priesthood: A Theology of Ordained Ministry*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993).

⁸² Torrance, *Royal Priesthood*, 88–108.

Torrance sees in this structure a way towards more organizational union with other denominations set up in an episcopal structure. Notably, in dialogue between the Church of Scotland and the Church of England/the Scottish Episcopal Church, Torrance proposes a way forward directly on the basis of his notion of “corporate episcopate.”⁸³ Torrance suggests that the Church of Scotland have one presbyter-bishop over each presbytery and that they would also serve at an individual parish, with one “Archbishop-Moderator” over all the presbyteries. For the episcopal structure of the Anglican Church, Torrance suggests that bishops have a less hierarchical role and that lay leaders become elders. Here, Torrance calls for a scheme of “mutual adaptation between Presbytery and Episcopacy,” an “act of God in bringing together in all their fullness and historical continuity two streams of Spiritual life and growth in the Church which is the one body of Christ.”⁸⁴

⁸³ The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 89. See also Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement: Volume 1*, 83–98 for further elaboration upon this point. Torrance sees precedent for the corporate episcopate in Scotland in Erksine and Knox and, more generally, in the Reformed tradition. Torrance refers to Calvin’s *Letter to the King of Poland* as precedent for a version of apostolic succession in Reformed churches. See p. 86. See also Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 33. Here he discusses John Knox’s rooting of succession in Christ rather than a simple linear succession.

⁸⁴ Torrance lists a number of doctrinal principles which he thinks are central for this merger:

- “1) Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and presides of it in all things.
- 2) Through baptismal incorporation into Christ all members of the Body are given to share in their appropriate way in His Royal Priesthood. They are joined together by the One Spirit in such a way that they are ordered by the Head according to a diversity of function and in a mutual subordination of love.
- 3) Within the Body and within its royal priesthood there is a special modification of the corporate priesthood bound with the ordering of the Eucharist. This is the ministry of the Word and Sacrament instituted and given by the ascended Lord to the Church and placed within the Body and it is continuously renewed in every age. It is essentially a subministration which by its very place and nature must not seek to dominate or lord it over the body, i.e., to usurp the place of the Head. As placed within the Body this ministry is essentially corporate, and must be given corporate

Torrance had high hopes for this proposed structure as a way forward in ecumenicity. He states:

In the light of this it would appear proper to work for a mutual adaptation of our churches and a re-ordering of their ministries in such a way as to assimilate into unity the three main aspects of the ministry that appear in churches of the Congregational, Presbyterian, and Episcopal types. In such an adaption there would take place an integration of the Episcopate with the Presbytery and an integration of this Episcopal Presbytery with the corporate priesthood of the whole body.⁸⁵

To Torrance's disappointment, the Church of Scotland would not come on board with this proposal and this method for ecumenical rapprochement was no longer Torrance's primary way; he took the more theological route discussed above.

Sacraments

Torrance's view of the Sacraments is rooted in the patristic notion of the vicarious humanity of Christ. He conceives of this doctrine as truly Reformed (through Calvin) and also patristic (primarily Athanasius and Cyril).⁸⁶ Torrance holds a very high view of the sacraments and liturgy placing him very much in line with those discussed in chapter one who are attracted to the early church and often convert to Orthodoxy or Catholicism on the basis of their rich sacramental and

expression serving the corporate priesthood, and must manifest a unity in the Body corresponding to its one Head.

4) Within and over the ministry of the Word and Sacrament, or the special priesthood of the Church, there is the 'episcopate', not as a higher ministry, but as a special gift for the oversight of the ministry, and as the sign both of the corporate nature of the priesthood and the corporate continuity of the Church." See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 89.

⁸⁵ The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 89.

⁸⁶ See Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 11 and also the section in chapter two on the vicarious humanity.

liturgical life. Regarding baptism, Torrance sees the New Testament and patristic conception of baptism to have been rooted, not in the act itself, but in the reality it points to, namely Christ's vicarious baptism and act of saving.⁸⁷ Similarly, Torrance holds a very high view of the Lord's Supper that he sees as patristic. In his introduction to his translation of Robert Bruce's sermons on the sacraments⁸⁸ Torrance discusses how he sees Bruce following the Fathers in his doctrine of the sacraments and particularly the Eucharist.⁸⁹ Throughout his sermons, which from his appreciative introduction Torrance clearly agrees with, Bruce puts forward a "spiritual union" in the Lord's Supper whereby Christ is really present and believers are made to truly feed upon the actual body and blood of Christ. As stated, Torrance sees this as a return to the early church and more faithful to the Fathers and the Roman Catholic notion of transubstantiation.⁹⁰

4.5 Conclusion

Currently the evangelical church is on the brink of a "neopatristic"⁹¹ revival on the basis of their *ressourcement* of classical Christian theology. As argued, although the Reformers were rooted in the Fathers and resolutely saw themselves

⁸⁷ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, 125–132. Torrance arrives at this notion on the basis of both his theology of the vicarious humanity and by his comparison of the Greek word *baptisma* to *kerygma*. He contends that, like *kerygma*, *baptisma* points to the reality beyond itself. James Barr is highly critical of this and other similar steps Torrance took with both Hebrew and Greek words. See James Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, Reprint (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004), 140f for Barr's critique of Torrance's interpretation of *baptisma*.

⁸⁸ Torrance, *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper; Sermons on the Sacrament Preached in the Kirk of Edinburgh by Robert Bruce in AD 1589*, 13–36.

⁸⁹ Torrance, *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper; Sermons on the Sacrament Preached in the Kirk of Edinburgh by Robert Bruce in AD 1589*, 32.

⁹⁰ This would further explain Torrance's turn to the Orthodox in ecumenical dialogue (rather than Roman Catholics).

⁹¹ To use Florovsky's word.

as a continuation of the evangelical tradition in the early church over against the Roman Catholics who had departed, subsequent Protestantism turned their back on the tradition of the classical Fathers for a variety of reasons as discussed in chapter one. However, owing to the shift from a modern to postmodern paradigm and, even more so, the work of figures such as Torrance, evangelicalism is currently returning to the classical tradition of the Fathers in full force.

The evangelical, Christological, and Trinitarian method of patristic appropriation while remaining in one's own tradition begun by Torrance has been followed by a number of scholars. Some of these theologians see themselves following in the footsteps of Torrance whereas others should simply be considered to be in the same evangelical stream of Torrance. The full outcome of the recent (and very much ongoing) evangelical re-appropriation of the classical Christian Fathers remains to be seen as it is those who are currently writing and publishing whom "carry the torch" now. Torrance has played a role in igniting this return and ought to continue to provide an example and serve as a guide for evangelicals wishing to return to the classical Greek Fathers.

Chapter one argued that upon discovery, evangelicals typically convert to another denomination (erroneously confusing faith and order by holding to a static view of confessions and theology) or (at varying levels) tendentiously appropriate a general Great Tradition (subjectively selecting ideas to appropriate). The subsequent chapters have explored Torrance's approach. His Christocentric,

Trinitarian, and evangelical appropriation allows him objective appropriation and reconstruction of the patristic tradition as well as reformation of his own tradition. This chapter argued, furthermore, that Torrance's approach is commendable considering his objectivity, faithfulness to the Fathers, evangelical commitment, and inherent ecumenical openness.

Torrance's return to the Greek Fathers is both objective and ecumenical. Placed next to other Protestant evangelical retrievals, Torrance's return to the Greek Fathers over and against Augustine is unique for his Reformed and Protestant tradition. The most unique element of Torrance is that he remains decisively Reformed while objectively appropriating the Greek Fathers. As such, he is an excellent example for Reformed and evangelical theologians wishing to appropriate the Greek Fathers. Torrance provides a viable template for appropriation. He portrays the Greek Fathers as the inheritance of the Reformed and evangelical tradition and he helpfully explores how this is so.

However, Bruce McCormack critiques Torrance's bypassing of Reformed confessions in his return to patristic theological themes.⁹² McCormack voices concern over the current trend in confessional Protestantism. As he sees it, Protestants who care about theological orthodoxy return to ancient Christianity

⁹² McCormack, "The End of Reformed Theology? The Voice of Karl Barth in the Doctrinal Chaos of the Present" in *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity*, eds. Alston Jr. and Welker, 46–64. Griffith is similarly critical. He argues that Torrance's departure from a forensic notion of justification "marks a decisive break with Calvin and the Reformed tradition." See also Howard Griffith, *High Priest in Heaven: The Intercession of the Exalted Christ in Reformed Theology, Analysis and Critique* (PhD Dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2004), 238. Griffith is, more generally, critical of Torrance for combining Christ's accomplished work with the application of this work to Christians, arguing that the two must be separated. See p. 221.

instead of the confessions of the Reformed church.⁹³ As argued in chapter one, this trend indeed exists. These Protestants are either subjective/self-norming (thus essentially liberal), converting to Roman Catholicism/Eastern Orthodoxy, or (as with many evangelicals) returning to Greek patristic theological themes and viewing them from an evangelical and Protestant (but sometimes too tendentiously Western) standpoint. McCormack contends that if present trends continue the only churches left in the west in the next century will be Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and conservative evangelical. He states: "Protestantism as we know it will have ceased to exist. The end of Reformed theology may well coincide with the end of Reformed churches."⁹⁴

McCormack attributes part of the problem to Reformed Protestant theologians who, while claiming to remain Reformed and Protestant, return to the Nicene Creed and the theology of the early church. McCormack contends that those attempting to return to the Nicene Creed and patristic theology can no longer be called "Reformed" because "Reformed" means interpreting the creed and the early church through the Reformed confessions.⁹⁵ Indeed, McCormack considers this return to be basically liberal. As he sees it, liberals and orthodox; converge here on the doctrine of "union with Christ" and ultimately it is not really objective but

⁹³ McCormack, "The End of Reformed Theology? The Voice of Karl Barth in the Doctrinal Chaos of the Present" in *Reformed Theology*, eds. Alston and Welker, 10.

⁹⁴ McCormack, "The End of Reformed Theology? The Voice of Karl Barth in the Doctrinal Chaos of the Present" in *Reformed Theology*, eds. Alston and Welker, 53.

⁹⁵ McCormack, "The End of Reformed Theology? The Voice of Karl Barth in the Doctrinal Chaos of the Present" in *Reformed Theology*, eds. Alston and Welker, 52.

subjective and self-norming-indeed, a union of the soul with Christ.⁹⁶ McCormack proposes that Reformed theologians (if they are really Reformed) must submit to the Reformed confession and he proposed a return to sources, namely, the Reformed confessions.⁹⁷ His conclusion is that, unless patristic theology is read through the Reformed confessions one is not really Reformed.⁹⁸

McCormack's critique of Torrance's approach assumes a seriously static view of what it means to be Reformed, much like the static approach to tradition taken up by those who confuse faith and order and consider it necessary to Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy after discovering the Fathers. This static approach is akin to the approach that Torrance sees in the Western church; the "Tertullian type of approach" towards both Scripture and confession.⁹⁹ According to Torrance the Reformed and evangelical churches often tend, rather unfortunately, towards this "Tertullian approach" and this "had the effect of

⁹⁶ McCormack argues that the emphasis on Nicaea/patristic theology outside the Reformed confessions tends to emphasize themes such as union with Christ. He contends this emphasis was not really objective but subjective and self-norming. See McCormack, "The End of Reformed Theology? The Voice of Karl Barth in the Doctrinal Chaos of the Present" in *Reformed Theology*, eds. Alston and Welker, 52–53. In his Croall Lectures at the University of Edinburgh in 2011 he similarly compared the theology of Athanasius and Schleiermacher. As discussed in chapter one, this critique assumes a Harnackian reading of Athanasius. McCormack's critique is part of a much bigger dissatisfaction with Protestant theology departing from typical Protestant emphases such as Penal Substitution, which McCormack considers to be central to traditional Protestantism.

⁹⁷ McCormack, "The End of Reformed Theology? The Voice of Karl Barth in the Doctrinal Chaos of the Present" in *Reformed Theology*, eds. Alston and Welker, 64.

⁹⁸ He strongly critiques Torrance (et al.) in a footnote. McCormack questioned whether the enterprise of theologians such as Torrance who make themes such as "union with Christ" and even go so far as to label it "*theosis*" could be rightly called "Reformed." He takes issue with (1) the fact that these emphases are not in the Reformed confessions and (2) that theologians such as Torrance return to these emphases while bypassing the Reformed confessions. See McCormack, "The End of Reformed Theology? The Voice of Karl Barth in the Doctrinal Chaos of the Present" in *Reformed Theology*, eds. Alston and Welker, 51 footnote 51.

⁹⁹ See Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 107.

reducing the church's Confession of the Faith to systems of doctrinal presuppositions which are invested with prescriptive authority."¹⁰⁰ Torrance sees this as "dualist" and "legalist" and believes that a more proper approach would be with a dynamic conception of the object of the Confession of Faith, or as he puts it, "we must learn to distinguish the Substance of the Faith from explicit doctrinal formulations. Thus here again we have a return to the perspective of Nicene theology."¹⁰¹ No doubt Torrance prefers a more dynamic notion of dogma/theology and theological language; the more "evangelical" and indeed "scientific" approach discussed in chapter two. Indeed, Torrance argues that the Protestant churches often tend towards a legalist approach to the confessions.¹⁰² His critique of the Reformed churches in this regard is strong.¹⁰³

Ultimately Torrance's separation of faith and order as well as the object of truth and expressions of truth is helpful in this regard. As he sees it, the Reformed tradition always views confessional formulations as subordinate to faith.¹⁰⁴ Those pioneering the "evangelical Calvinist" movement are following a similar mindset with much fruit.¹⁰⁵ Here, Torrance's reading is relevant in today's theological

¹⁰⁰ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 107.

¹⁰¹ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 107.

¹⁰² See Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 91–107 particularly 103–107. He urges for evangelicals to depart from the Tertullian type legalist approach where expression of the truth becomes abstract and detached from the truth itself to which it points and to return to the Bible and to the confessions and to return rather to a more Irenaean and personal approach wherein the focus is not on the Deposit of Faith or the *kerygma* itself but to the Person/work of Jesus Christ to whom/which it points, namely, the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον.

¹⁰³ See Torrance, Introduction to *The School of Faith*, xvii–xi.

¹⁰⁴ Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I*, 6–10.

¹⁰⁵ Habets and Grow, eds., *Evangelical Calvinism: Essays Resourcing the Continuing Reformation of the Church*. Thus their situating themselves more with the Scots Confession than with Westminster, in a

climate. This chapter explored where Torrance's approach uniquely fits not only among evangelicals returning to the Fathers but also evangelicals appropriating the Fathers in similar ways to Torrance. The argument was proffered that Torrance's approach is highly relevant. Therefore, a critical adoption of it is much in order. The following chapter will offer an assessment of Torrance's project and explore his uniqueness more fully. This concluding chapter will also offer a proposed way forward, namely, critical adoption of Torrance's lens and method.

very Torrancian fashion. See p. 5. They view theology as a "centered set" rather than a "bounded set" to use mathematical language.

Conclusion

An assessment and proposed adoption of Torrance

Few contemporary theologians in [Torrance's] tradition have so thoroughly and consistently appropriated the spiritual wealth of Greek patristic theology and particularly the theology of the Alexandrian Church as it was given expression and formulation by the great Fathers, Athanasius and Cyril.

George Dion. Dragas, "The Significance for the Church of Professor Torrance's Election As Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland," 216.

5.1. Introduction

This thesis has explored the substance, merit, place, and relevance of the patristic scholarship of Thomas F. Torrance. The study has shown that Torrance imaginatively reconstructs the Greek Fathers in light of the evangelical tenets of the Reformation, and accordingly, reconstructs elements of Reformed theology in light of Greek patristic theology into a Reformed evangelical version of the *Consensus Patrum*.¹ Torrance combines the Christological emphasis of classic Christianity and the evangelical/soteriological emphasis of Reformed Christianity and reconstructs the Fathers around this basis.² For Torrance, this essentially means a reconstruction of the Fathers around Athanasius and the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ, which, as he sees it, encapsulates these dual core emphases,

¹ Torrance states: "When Greek Patristic Theology is studied and interpreted in the strong Biblical perspective restored through the Reformation of the Church in the West that its permanent place in the foundations of Evangelical Theology may be appreciated in a new way...[and] when Reformed Theology is reassessed and interpreted in light of its ancient roots in the evangelical theology of the early centuries that its essential catholicity and its unifying force are to be understood." See Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement*, 21–22.

² Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology*, 14–15; Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today*, 20; Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 235–237; 285; Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 267.

captured by the patristic era and the Nicene era.³ Consequently, Torrance sees an “evangelical stream” of theology running from Irenaeus through Athanasius, Cyril, Didymus, Epiphanius, Calvin, and culminating in the theology of Karl Barth. This evangelical stream is the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum*. In many ways, Torrance sees his vocation involving a preservation of this “stream” and he uses it to “evangelize” contemporary theology that had fallen into epistemological, cosmological, and soteriological dualism in both the Eastern and Western churches.

Torrance’s project offers an evangelical and theologically driven reading of classic Christianity. This has much to offer not only to Reformed evangelical Protestantism’s generally functional (as opposed to ontological/personal) Christology but also to, more generally, the current patrological climate where the church Fathers’ are often studied in the context of a history of late-antiquity rather than theology.⁴ Ecumenically, Torrance’s project opens the door for ecumenical dialogue with both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches because, on the one hand, it assists evangelicals in seeing themselves in line with patristic Christianity and, on the other hand, offers a basis for rapprochement with other churches.⁵

The overall argument in this thesis has been that Torrance imaginatively reconstructs the Greek Fathers in light of the evangelical tenets of the Reformation

³ Or, the “epistemological and evangelical significance of the ὁμοούσιον,” see e.g. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 133–159.

⁴ A critique proffered recently by the Eastern Orthodox patrologist John Behr. See Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 18.

⁵ Perhaps, in the words of Colin Gunton, because it provides a “reopening of a major historical conversation.” See Gunton, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 51.

and around Athanasius' doctrine of the ὁμοούσιον. This study has been focused upon Torrance's reading and use of the church Fathers and thus has focused on the patristic side of Torrance's historical reconstruction though, no doubt, much could be explored in regards to Torrance's reconstruction of the Reformed tradition in light of classic patristic theology.

In chapter one this thesis explored the historical precedent of Torrance's project by means of a study of the *Consensus Patrum* in historical Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy, including recent evangelical retrievals of the Fathers. Chapters two and three explored the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* itself, arguing that it consists of catholic themes (chapter two) and figures (chapter three), centered upon Athanasius and the ὁμοούσιον. In chapter four this thesis unpacked the ecumenical significance of Torrance's project arguing that Torrance's *consensus* enables him to remain in his own Reformed evangelical tradition while retrieving the Greek Fathers in an ecumenical fashion. This concluding chapter will offer an appreciative yet critical assessment of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* and a proposed way forward, toward an "evangelical patristic theology," critically adopting the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum*.

5.2 A critical appreciation

Throughout each chapter of this thesis, appreciative criticism has been offered on Torrance's reading of the church Fathers in the form of critical exposition, comment, comparison, and analysis. The Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* has much merit inasmuch as it is largely faithful to the catholic themes and figures

of classical patristic (especially Greek patristic) Christianity while remaining substantially evangelical and Reformed. In addition to this objectivity, the Torrancian *consensus* is inherently ecumenical and has paved a path for others to follow.

As Bromiley helpfully points out, the way forward for evangelical studies of classical Christianity has to do with the fact that classical patristic views do not necessarily lead to medieval Roman Catholic views.⁶ Indeed, nor do they lead to contemporary Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox views. Rather, classical patristic Christianity, in fact, can lead just as much to contemporary evangelicalism. Thus, instead of being only Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox resources, the Fathers are equally (if not more so) evangelical resources. The classical Fathers have, as Bromiley notes, provided excellent guides for discussion of the Trinity, Christology, atonement, (and more), and are excellent resources for evangelicals.⁷ Ultimately, then, to use the words of Williams, evangelicals learn from Torrance that:

To be 'deep in history' for evangelical Protestantism need not be and should not be oxymoronic. One should not leave evangelicalism or a believer's church setting to be nourished by the substantial resources available in ancient (or patristic) Christianity. The great model for this undertaking was and is Philip Schaff, whose scholarly work of the last century in producing translations of primary texts of church history, the early church especially, is a sufficient demonstration that any oxymoron between Protestantism and the whole of the church's history is artificially self-imposed.⁸

⁶ Wells and Pinnock, eds., *Toward a Theology for the Future*, 130–135.

⁷ Wells and Pinnock, eds., *Toward a Theology for the Future*, 135–140.

⁸ Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition*, 12.

Indeed, Schaff, the younger evangelicals, and especially, this thesis has argued, Torrance are great examples to be followed; and, hopefully more will continue to work on the ground which they have so wonderfully tilled. This thesis has argued that Torrance provides a viable model for Reformed evangelicals.

Ultimately, Torrance not only offers fresh insight into patristic and Reformed theology, offering challenges to traditional readings of both, but also provides a genealogy of church history and a lens through which evangelicals and Reformed can confidently see the patristic tradition as their inheritance and read the Greek Fathers. Torrance has paved the way for his method to be critically taken up and applied in further theological studies of the church Fathers. Indeed, patrology, systematic theology, and evangelicals/Reformed wishing to retrieve the Fathers have much for which to thank Torrance and much that they can learn from him both substantially and methodologically.

Chapter one argued that the typical Western and Protestant tradition, often uncritically, focuses upon Augustine and Augustinian theology. Torrance, rather, returns to Athanasius and attacked Augustine. Chapter three discussed Torrance's uniqueness as a Reformed Protestant returning to Athanasius and the other Greek Fathers rather than Augustine and the Augustinian tradition. The Torrancian *Consensus Patrum's* truly catholic breadth can be seen particularly in light of those discussed in chapter one (a) who return to the Greek Fathers and convert to Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy, (b) who return to the Greek Fathers and

tendentiously appropriate them, and (c) the current trend within evangelical circles, especially in North America, towards a return to the Greek Fathers.

This thesis argued that the evangelical return to classical Christianity (the third group discussed in chapter one), while most like Torrance and commendable in many regards, tends towards amalgamation of the many strands of patristic tradition into one great “Tradition” and can tend towards unfairly Western reading of the Fathers by continuing to focus on Augustinian and Western theological themes. Torrance stands unique among them inasmuch as he, while remaining staunchly evangelical and Reformed, returns to truly catholic themes and figures. Therefore, this group could learn much from Torrance as his appropriation of the themes from patristic theology, while remaining committed to his own Reformed and evangelical tradition, can serve as an example for others wishing to retrieve the Fathers objectively into their own tradition in the future. Torrance’s genealogy of theological history provides a helpful template to be used critically by evangelicals and Reformed theologians wishing to appropriate the Fathers into their own tradition.

Torrance’s approach potentially sheds light upon why many others are “heading east.” Many theologians (academic, clerical, and lay) are dissatisfied with typical Western/Augustinian emphases on the *ordu salutis*, double predestination, and the forensic elements of the atonement.⁹ Torrance’s departure from this and his emphasis on Greek patristic themes and figures (e.g. Athanasius, Cyril, union

⁹ Notably, those in the evangelical Calvinist movement. See Habets and Grow, eds., *Evangelical Calvinism*.

with Christ, and the personal/Christo-centric nature of the atonement) can be viewed as a part of this greater movement. Additionally, Torrance's separation of faith and order as well as the substance of the faith from the expression of the faith provides a helpful parameter for ecumenical dialogue allowing evangelical theologians to remain evangelical but not remain statically evangelical. Ultimately, Torrance's approach, namely, remaining substantially Reformed and evangelical while appropriating the Greek Fathers provides an example and guide for further appropriation.

Torrance's project of patristic reconstruction is successful, generally faithful to the theological ideas and commitments of the Fathers, and highly imaginative and constructive. Indeed, as his former student George Dragas put it:

Few contemporary theologians in [Torrance's] tradition have so thoroughly and consistently appropriated the spiritual wealth of Greek patristic theology and particularly the theology of the Alexandrian Church as it was given expression and formulation by the great Fathers, Athanasius and Cyril.¹⁰

Torrance returns to the Fathers and attempts to not only grasp what they mean but also seeks to creatively apply them in his own context. This thesis has argued that Torrance is largely successful in his attempt and reconstructs both his own Reformed evangelical tradition and many standard readings of the Fathers in light of one another. As such, Torrance's Reformed evangelical *consensus* offers a helpful Reformed and evangelical approach to the *Consensus Patrum*.

¹⁰ Dragas, "The Significance for the Church of Professor Torrance's Election As Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland," 216.

Torrance has “cleared the ground” for others to continue his work. He successfully presents the Greek Fathers as the “inheritance” of Protestants, evangelicals, and Reformed as much as they are the inheritance of Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. He also paints the evangelical tradition as in line with classical Christianity, particularly the theology of the Greek Fathers. This provides an excellent guide for further evangelical appropriation and a bridge for ecumenical dialogue. Torrance’s approach offers a legitimate method to be adopted by Reformed and evangelical theologians and his reading offers a helpful lens through which to view the Fathers.

Whereas the more holistic approaches of Webber, Oden, and Williams discussed in chapter one have much to offer and, indeed, can act somewhat as a corrective to Torrance’s sometimes binary reading of the Fathers they offer some hermeneutical problems. Primarily, their approach, while in theory looking to all of the evangelical tradition, in practice tends to focus on particular eras and figures without offering a reason why.¹¹ Other than Oden, there is no prescribed method of appropriation and even Oden’s project offers no method for choosing particular streams over others; and there most certainly were different streams that can all be considered classical Christianity. There are nuances among the Fathers and one need only to read the Fathers to see that disagreement existed among them. There

¹¹ Williams voices a similar critique of Oden’s appropriation. Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism*, 34.

is no seamless “Tradition.”¹² Torrance provides a viable reading of these differences, while at the same time preserving certain nuance and making distinctions.

Typically, scholars in the these Protestant movements of retrieval acknowledge but do not substantially use Torrance, perhaps owing to lack of knowledge of his patristic appropriation¹³ or perhaps owing to his overly binary depiction/emphasis on Greek patristic themes such as *theosis*.¹⁴ Torrance approaches the Greek Fathers on their own terms and allows what he finds to reform his own tradition; the outcome is Torrance, a Reformed theologian, talking about, for example, *theosis*, the vicarious humanity of Christ, and bishops. This stands out amongst the many current evangelical retrievals which look for Protestant themes in the Greek Fathers.

Thus, while the entirety of these figures offer a helpful corrective to Torrance’s sometimes simplistic and binary reading of the patristic era, their more

¹² Though, the current trajectory of Ayres, Holmes, et al., in large part, disagrees. Holmes asserts a seamless garment, a “one voice,” of the classical and truly ecumenical Christian tradition on the doctrine of the Trinity spanning East and West, Greek and Latin. See Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, 144–146. There are others who agree with Torrance that there is distinction in the patristic era. See John Behr, “Calling upon God as Father: Augustine and the Legacy of Nicaea” in Papanikolaou and Demacopoulos, eds., *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, 153–165 for an account that is more nuanced than traditional East-West distinctions but that argues for important differences. The way forward may be somewhere in the middle of the spectrum between Torrance’s strong distinctions and the newer readings’ “one voice.”

¹³ With notable exceptions: See Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 165–166 who was clearly influenced by Torrance. Notably, Williams’ only reference to Torrance is a critique of misreading the early Greek Fathers on justification. Williams is critical of Protestant theologians returning only to Augustine for proof of a Protestant doctrine of justification and sees the early Greek Fathers asserting substantially the same position as the Reformers. Accordingly, he is critical of Torrance for accusing the Greek Fathers of not holding to an Augustinian notion of justification. See D. H. Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition*, 130–139.

¹⁴ Typically Protestants in this movement tend towards very broad ecumenism and look to a general “Great Tradition.”

holistic and synthetic approach is equally as problematic. The Fathers are indeed not a seamless garment and a hermeneutic for appropriation is much needed. Furthermore, the Greek Fathers simply did not work with the same themes as the Western Fathers.¹⁵ Accordingly, Torrance's objective focus on Greek patristic themes such as the *ὁμοούσιον* and the epistemological and soteriological/evangelical implications contained within it remains a helpful guide for evangelical appropriations of classical Christianity who want to remain evangelical on the one hand and faithful to the Fathers on the other hand. It is important to approach the Fathers on their own terms. Torrance does this and extracts what he learns applying it to his own tradition. The temptation is to tendentiously look for certain themes in the Fathers and Torrance is an example of how to successfully approach the Fathers from a certain perspective while also being fair to the Fathers themselves.

There are theologians more in line with Torrance's objective focus, evangelical commitments, and faithfulness to the Fathers such as Colin Gunton and his return to the "classical tradition" as he called it and his strong focus on the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁶ Bromiley also proposes a more objectively focused appropriation.¹⁷ Additionally, Donald Fairbairn offers a Christologically-centered

¹⁵ See McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*.

¹⁶ Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology*. Though Gunton's conclusions are different than Torrance and more in line with Torrance's "Cappadocian distinction," in methodology Gunton is more in line with Torrance than the more holistic approaches discussed above.

¹⁷ Wells and Pinnock, eds., *Toward a Theology for the Future*, 145–151.

and grace based approach much akin to Torrance.¹⁸ Finally, Andrew Purves' publications and teaching focus upon a similar approach to classical patristic theology.¹⁹

Ultimately, Torrance can and should continue to act as a helpful guide. By showing that the Fathers are precursors to the evangelical tradition and that evangelicalism is a continuation of the evangelical stream in the early church he provides impetus for evangelical appropriation of the Fathers. Furthermore, the example of Torrance's ecumenical work should act as a guide for how to approach the Fathers as an evangelical while remaining in one's own tradition. It is notable that though, as discussed in chapter three, his work on the Fathers has generally not been utilized by patristics scholars or Reformed evangelical theologians, there has been a fairly positive reception of it by both Eastern Orthodox and Catholics. For example, Orthodox theologians such as George Dragas,²⁰ Matthew Baker,²¹ John Behr (to a certain extent),²² and even Georges Florovsky²³ are all fairly positive in

¹⁸ Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*; Donald Fairbairn, "Patristic Soteriology: Three Trajectories," 289–310.

¹⁹ Purves' teaching currently entails Reformed theology and he teaches very much from a patristic perspective much akin to Torrance. His publications focus on his former role as Professor of Pastoral Theology and place pastoral theology in a Christological and Trinitarian context by means of the Fathers and also Torrance himself. See Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation*.

²⁰ Dragas, "The Significance for the Church of Professor Torrance's Election As Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland."

²¹ Baker, "The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance."

²² Behr, "Divine Meaning Book Review."

²³ See Mathew Baker, "The Eternal 'Spirit of the Son': Barth, Florovsky and Torrance on the *Filioque*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, vol. 12, no. 4 who argues for substantial similarity between Florovsky and Torrance in both Triadology and, more generally, basic theology. In his classes, George Dragas, who studied under both Torrance and Florovsky has commented that the two were close and both voiced deep appreciation for the other to him.

their reception of Torrance. Roman Catholic theologians such as Paul Molnar²⁴ are also deeply appreciative of Torrance's theology.

Torrance's *Consensus Patrum* is therefore highly relevant not only ecumenically but also for the current generation of evangelicals. Theologians in the "evangelical Calvinism" movement such as Myk Habets are currently using the method with figures from the Reformation.²⁵ Practically, Torrance's method can be applied very directly by exploring what the evangelical stream in the early church looked like in specific instances and in contemporary evangelical application.²⁶

However, Torrance's project is sometimes overly binary. This tendency can be corrected by those following the path set out by Torrance by applying his grace/Christ-centered reading to his strong distinctions and towards further readings of patristic themes and figures. Torrance can sometimes be very black and white in his attacks and perhaps a bit more nuance is needed and can be applied today in re-readings of these patristic doctrinal themes and figures.

5.3 A critical adoption

Accordingly, the rest of this conclusion will offer a proposed "way forward" from this study; a projected application of the fruits of this study and of Torrance's method. This will entail (1) pointing to which elements of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* should be adopted, (2) pointing to which elements of the

²⁴ Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*.

²⁵ Habets and Grow, eds., *Evangelical Calvinism*. It is basically a reconstruction of Calvin's theology around the central tenets of the Gospel. Evangelical Calvinism is "constructive theology." See pp. 7–8

²⁶ Such as asceticism. See Radcliff, "A Reformed asceticism."

Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* should be left behind, and (3) proposing a way forward, towards an “evangelical patristic theology.” This will be done by means of by an exploration of Torrance’s article “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy”²⁷ as an illustrative point of departure.

This thesis has offered much appreciation of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* throughout each chapter. Torrance is both objectively focused upon God in Christ and theologically constructive. Torrance consistently begins his reading of the *consensus* from a starting point in Christ and, therein, God himself. Herein, Torrance sees himself following Athanasius.²⁸ His project remains focused upon Christology and, therein, Triadology and he continually reconstructs patristic theological themes in light of the Reformation doctrine of grace while at the same time attempting to do the Fathers justice by using their own themes and terms. Torrance contends that the affirmations in the fourth century at Nicaea and in the sixteenth century during the Protestant Reformation are complementary; the former emphasizing God’s presence with humankind in Christ and the later emphasizing the connection of the identity of the gift of grace and the Giver of grace.²⁹ For Torrance, both of these movements in the church preserved essential aspects to the great emphasis on the Greek patristic theme of the ὁμοούσιον, namely, that in Christ God has completely given himself to humankind in revelation

²⁷ Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” 461–482.

²⁸ Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” 461.

²⁹ Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” 462.

and reconciliation.³⁰ Torrance's connection of Nicene theology and Reformation theology is extremely insightful and offers a convincing picture of the way in which the Fathers are the "property" of evangelical Protestants while at the same time remaining inherently ecumenical and faithful to the Fathers. Furthermore, Torrance's reading of Nicene theology through the lens of the evangelical theology of the Reformation allows for fresh insight into the theology of the Fathers and a reconstruction of his own theological tradition in a plethora of areas, but most notably in Christology and, generally, all other areas flow out of Christology of Torrance.

The Torrancian *Consensus Patrum's* focus upon Christology offers a significant challenge to Reformed Protestant Christology and, as such, offers much to this tradition. Chapter two of this thesis argued that the kernel of the Torrancian *consensus* is Athanasius' doctrine of the ὁμοούσιον, by which Torrance means "God Himself is the actual content of His revelation and God Himself is really in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to Himself."³¹ For, Torrance, this insistence was key for the Nicene Fathers, especially Athanasius, and serves as the cornerstone of the *consensus* and, accordingly, acts as the cornerstone of dogmatic theology in general. Torrance's emphasis upon the Nicene and Athanasian ὁμοούσιον, offering much methodologically, offers, more pointedly, a substantial challenge to Reformed Protestant Christology itself.

³⁰ Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 464.

³¹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 7.

Reformed Protestant Christology has, historically, been largely “functional” in that its emphasis, rather than on the person of Jesus Christ, is more so upon the work of Christ.³² In “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” Torrance traces varying versions of the Latin Heresy in western Christianity from Leo the Great through Anselm into contemporary western theology.³³ In Reformed Protestant theology, such as in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the ontological aspect of Christology is not denied, but the emphasis upon the functional aspect of Christology in effect ignores the ontological or personal side of Christology, favoring what Christ has done over who Christ is, Christ’s person.

Serving as an important challenge to this perspective, Torrance’s Athanasius-ὁμοούσιον emphasis offers an important re-situating of Reformed Protestantism on Christology. Working off the ground tilled by Karl Barth on this,³⁴ and by tracing it back further to Athanasius, Nicaea, and the Greek Fathers Torrance widens the perspective and shows the broader context for this Christological emphasis. Torrance argues throughout “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy” that the person and work of Christ cannot be separated and throughout his other works, as chapter two of this thesis argued, the ontological/personal aspect of Christology—the ὁμοούσιον—is absolutely central.

³² This is what Torrance calls the “Latin Heresy.” See Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy.”

³³ Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” 477–478. Here, he surely also has in mind the Reformed scholastic tradition, particularly the Westminster Tradition of which he was so critical in, e.g., his Introduction to *School of Faith*.

³⁴ Torrance acknowledges this and speaks very highly of Barth’s role in re-directing the emphasis in Reformed and evangelical thought in “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy” and elsewhere.

In addition to the purely Christological aspect discussed above, Torrance's approach offers challenges on a variety of levels, as argued in chapter two of this thesis. The ontological emphasis in Torrance's Christology challenges traditional Reformed Protestant emphases on the Penal Substitutionary theory of the atonement and incorporates it into a much broader atonement theory involving *theosis* and union with Christ. The ontological emphasis in Torrance's Christology, combined with his view of the vicarious humanity of Christ, illuminates more fully the importance of the entire life of Christ, viewing the atonement in light of the incarnation, rather than the incarnation in light of the atonement.

Furthermore, Torrance's *consensus* offers much in regards to a holistic approach in contrast to a more dualistic approach. In his article "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," Torrance discusses his viewpoint that Karl Barth, following in the classical tradition of the church, was attacking Augustinian, Cartesian, and Newtonian dualism which had been running rampant in the church.³⁵ Torrance sees this dualism problematically undergirding Western theology in their doctrines of revelation³⁶ and reconciliation.³⁷ Torrance sees the dualism prevalent throughout the Western church, evident in such theologians as Leo the Great, Anselm, Peter Lombard, Aquinas, and, more generally, Roman Catholic and

³⁵ Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 463.

³⁶ Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 463–473.

³⁷ Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 473–479.

Reformed theology. Torrance sees “obvious connections” between Karl Barth and Athanasius³⁸ and sees a broad tradition in the church following in this stream.³⁹

Certain elements of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* can be left behind as theologians of the next generation attempt to build on the fertile soil laid by Torrance. Throughout the discussion of the catholic themes and figures used by Torrance in his patristic reconstruction, critiques were offered regarding the way in which Torrance often brings the Fathers too much into his own context.

Contained within this critique is a compliment: Torrance brings the Fathers into his own context and, very successfully, applies them to his own situation. However, while there is much to be commended in this, Torrance sometimes amalgamates modern and patristic theology and, even more so, Torrancian/Barthian and patristic theology in ways that can be unfair to the Fathers. Sometimes, instead of “obvious connections,” between Athanasius and Barth (as Torrance puts it), Athanasius begins to look nearly identical to Barth.⁴⁰

So, the method for figuring out what to “shave off” Torrance might look something like: What elements are more a part of Torrance’s specific context than

³⁸ Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” 464.

³⁹ Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” 476.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 240f and Torrance’s discussion of Athanasius’ scientific theology. The point here is not that Torrance’s connections are unfounded (chapter three argued that his connections are highly creative and helpful); rather, the point is simply that sometimes Torrance’s “obvious connections” (as creative and helpful as they are) are not explicitly stated by Torrance and this gives the impression that Athanasius’ theology is Barthian theology written in patristic Greek and Arius is propagating basically the same heresy as Schleiermacher, etc. Torrance often jumps between Barth and the Fathers sounding as if they are saying basically the same thing. See e.g. *Trinitarian Faith*, 93 and *Christian Doctrine of God* wherein Barth is referred to fairly often. See also *Space, Time, and Incarnation*.

otherwise? These elements can then be revisited with fresh eyes and, perhaps, left behind with Torrance.

The first element is Torrance's attack on dualism. As discussed, Torrance sees his vocation as involving attacking the dualism embedded in Western theology.⁴¹ The Fathers often become Torrance's tools in the fulfillment of this vocation. Torrance sees elements of this problem present in patristic theology (such as in the debate between Athanasius and Arius). However at times Torrance's rendering of Athanasius' battle with Arianism looks suspiciously like his own attack on dualism in modern theology. Torrance sees himself combatting cosmological and epistemological dualism throughout his many texts. Accordingly, one of the aspects to Torrance's approach to the Fathers is that he is searching for elements of this in theological history. In turn, Torrance attacks many figures for elements of dualism in their thought: Augustine, Gregory Palamas, and Aquinas are all accused of this at some point and because of this Torrance does not really accord them much space in his texts. Torrance's broad, sweeping attacks (such as "the Latin heresy") can herein tend towards over-simplicity. It is surely an over simplification to say that the entire west was dualist in epistemology and soteriology from Augustine until Barth.⁴² Thus, perhaps more nuance is needed here. One could reasonably say that Torrance has dealt with the problem of

⁴¹ See e.g. Torrance, *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 213–240.

⁴² Torrance accuses Augustine of dualism based on neoplatonic commitments. See e.g. Torrance's comments in Minutes from the Orthodox Reformed Consultation, Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Chambesy, Geneva, 6–11, March 1983 in The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Box 170. Current Augustine scholarship now tends to avoid viewing Augustine in light of neoplatonism. See e.g. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*.

dualism. Torrance rightly saw certain interpretations of these figures as dualist and attacked that; however, today scholars can nuance their approach to these figures more than Torrance did in his day.

Chapter three discussed Torrance's attack on the "Cappadocian distinction" and the "Byzantine trajectory" of Gregory Palamas. The argument was put forward that this attack was, more deeply, aimed at John Zizioulas and, therefore, Torrance's distinction between Nicene theology and the Cappadocian distinction is really more about the 1980s than the 380s. Embedded within this debate is Torrance's more negative reception of the Augustinian West and the Byzantine East. However, the attacks are, once again, aimed more at theologians of his own context. His battle with Augustinian soteriological dualism is, more deeply, with the Federal/Scholastic/Westminster theology that he came across in his own context and his attack on the Cappadocians and Gregory Palamas is more on John Zizioulas and, even more so, the neopalamite reading. On the one hand, these are largely successfully applications of the Fathers into his own tradition. On the other hand, however, for theologians not in deep debate with the theology of the neopalamites, Zizioulas, and Federal theology, these elements of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* can be revisited and perhaps left with Torrance. Torrance successfully dealt with these problems and it is up to theologians today to move forward without elements of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* which were only relevant for his context and contributed to his tendency towards over simplification and binary division.

In his reading of the patristic tradition Torrance hardly discusses other patristic scholars or secondary texts and is not always entirely transparent about his filters for reading the Fathers. Indeed, the list of his secondary sources is very limited.⁴³ As John Behr notes, any look at the footnotes of Torrance's texts leaves the reader in wonderment at the number of primary source citations and at the same time the lack of secondary citations.⁴⁴

Furthermore, Torrance clearly has a number of ideas he considers core. Chapter two explored Torrance's view of Christ's assumption of fallen humanity arguing it may have come, in part, from H.R. Mackintosh's reading of Gregory Nazianzen. Chapter two also explored Torrance's discussion of the Greek versus the Latin views of the atonement and notes that his view has elements similar to John McLeod Campbell along with the Greek Fathers. Additionally, Torrance's vision assumes some notion of the Newmanian notion of "Development of Doctrine" discussed in chapter one, which is very possible via Orr.⁴⁵

Chapter three explored Torrance's commitment to Barthian theology. Additionally, chapters two and three explored Torrance's fondness for Augustinian Triadology which he considers to be basically Greek patristic. Finally, Torrance's

⁴³ If his personal library catalogue is any indicator, he was working primarily with Protestant secondary sources (such as Dorner and Bethune-Baker), especially liberal (such as Harnack and Zahn). See his catalogue in The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 209.

⁴⁴ John Behr, "Divine Meaning Book Review," 107.

⁴⁵ Torrance's reading of the patristic era looks very much like that of James Orr at times. See James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1901). Notably, the Torrance archives at Princeton Seminary contain notes taken by Torrance on this text highlighting such ideas as situating Athanasius in the episcopal side of the Alexandrian school as well as Irenaeus as in line with Athanasius as a biblical theologian. Torrance also included Orr's text on the reading list for his Dogmatics course at New College. See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 16 and 51 respectively.

reading of Athanasius on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit sometimes borders on seeing Athanasius as adhering to the *filioque* without stating it outright.⁴⁶

Torrance could have been clearer about his filters and what ideas were really from Athanasius, Barth, etc., and what was, in fact, Torrance. Indeed, it sometimes seems that Torrance thinks they were all saying basically the same thing and the line between what each figure actually said and Torrance's own conclusions is not always evident.

5.4 What is the way forward? Towards an “evangelical patristic theology”

When the items relevant only to Torrance's context are removed, and the perennially beneficial elements of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* kept, an “evangelical patristic theology” emerges. The rest of this chapter will attempt to offer a (very) basic outline of a way forward, towards an “evangelical patristic theology.”

First, as explored in chapter one, every interpreter of the *Consensus Patrum* has a lens. Therefore, Protestant evangelicals should not be ashamed to have an “evangelical lens” through which they approach the *consensus*. Torrance has successfully reminded evangelicals and Reformed that the Fathers are their inheritance as much, if not more, than Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox. Furthermore, he has shown that patristic themes and figures can (and should) be

⁴⁶ A view similar to that of Shapland as seen in his Introduction to *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*, trans. C.R.B. Shapland and also Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, 212–221.

approached through the lens of the evangelical commitments of the Reformers in the sixteenth century. Indeed, this is the proper approach for an evangelical.

Second, Torrance has offered a very helpful way to objectively approach the *Consensus Patrum*, namely, through the Athanasian ὁμοούσιον, Christology, and Triadology. Chapter one explored ways in which appropriation of the Fathers can tend towards tendentiousness without an objective principle. Torrance has offered an example of how to remain objective; by focusing on the central doctrine of Christ and, therein, the Trinity.

Thirdly, through the above two commitments, Torrance sheds fresh light on many truly catholic patristic themes and figures. While remaining evangelically committed, Torrance approaches the Fathers essentially on their own terms. This generally sets him apart from those in the paleo-orthodox movement which often approaches the Fathers with the desire of finding Western and Protestant themes and remains too statically committed to their confessions in a “Tertullian fashion.” Torrance’s themes and figures were discussed in chapters two and three respectively. Examples of the fresh light shed by Torrance are his reading of the vicarious humanity of Christ in Athanasius and Irenaeus, his reading of the science of theology in the Alexandrian tradition, his reformation of the *filioque* debate, and his manifold insights into ministry and ecclesiology in light of the early church and Christology.

Torrance has paved the way and it is up to theologians today to pick up where he left off and work towards constructing an “evangelical patristic theology.”

An evangelical patristic theology need not adopt the elements purely relevant to Torrance's context discussed above. Then, an evangelical patristic theology can revisit some of the more contextual elements of the Torrancian *consensus* and, following Torrance's example, approach truly catholic patristic themes and figures on their own terms, while remaining committed to the evangelical tenets of the Reformation.

An evangelical patristic theology is more capacious and less binary than Torrance. This is along the lines of the contemporary work of Lewis Ayres in re-reading the Nicene era.⁴⁷ Accordingly, with Ayres an evangelical patristic theology revisits Nicaea and the doctrine of the Trinity, perhaps seeing less of a distinction between Athanasius and the Cappadocians.⁴⁸ Even more relevant is Ayres re-reading of Augustine; a significantly more capacious reading than Torrance.⁴⁹ The Western tradition may have much fruit which has not been picked on account of Torrance's widespread attack on dualism in the Latin and Byzantine traditions. Patristics scholars are now viewing the patristic era in a much more nuanced

⁴⁷ Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*. See pp. 188–221 for Ayres on Basil and pp. 365–383 for Ayres on Augustine. Though, as aforementioned, the trajectory of Holmes, Ayres, Barnes, et al. tends towards seeing the patristic tradition speaking with “one voice.” This is probably an oversimplification on the opposite extreme of Torrance. Torrance shows that there are differences among figures in the patristic era, the newer readings show that these differences are not as clear-cut as Torrance contends; however, the *via media* is likely the best route forward: The Fathers were in basic agreement but with different emphases and nuances.

⁴⁸ An evangelical patristic theology is also open to discussion of figures left out by Torrance such as Marcellus of Ancyra. See Parvis' groundbreaking work on Marcellus: *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy 325–345*. Parvis sees Marcellus as substantially more central than often thought by the rest of 20th century scholarship.

⁴⁹ Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*.

fashion than during Torrance's era. Along with Ayres, John Rist,⁵⁰ Michel Barnes,⁵¹ and David Bentley Hart,⁵² to name a few, an evangelical patristic theology sees Augustine as, at least somewhat, in line theologically with the Greek Fathers (their emphasis is typically on the doctrine of the Trinity). Their argument is that Augustine was not as strong a proponent on such things as the *filioque* as later interpreters would have it. Perhaps he is in line with the Greek Fathers on more than this; there is much room indeed for further exploration.⁵³

Furthermore, an evangelical patristic theology might explore a re-reading of Gregory Palamas, along the lines of the re-reading offered earlier in this thesis. The *hesychastic* tradition of Palamas is an area that has been central to Byzantine theology for centuries and does not receive any attention from Torrance on account of his attack. Torrance's attack on both the Latin and Byzantine tradition is based on his battle against dualism. Evangelical patristic theology exists in a different era from Torrance and, accordingly, it can approach both traditions with the basic commitments of the Torrancian *Consensus Patrum* but can mine the depths of both traditions in ways not done by Torrance. Further studies of Palamas, the later

⁵⁰ John Rist, *Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Rist argues that Augustine should be viewed less as a neo-Platonist and more as a Christian theologian.

⁵¹ Barnes, "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity," 145–176.

⁵² David Bentley Hart, "The Hidden and the Manifest: Metaphysics After Nicaea," 191–226.

⁵³ Current scholarship on Aquinas is also working more along these lines. See Fergus Kerr *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 56–65 for Kerr's appraisal of Aquinas on his so-called "natural theology." While not equating Barth and Aquinas, Kerr offers a reading that sees Barth and Aquinas more in line than traditionally thought. Karen Kilby offers a related reading of Aquinas on the doctrine of the Trinity. She sees Aquinas as emphasizing the distinctiveness of each person of the Trinity more than traditionally thought. See Karen Kilby, "Aquinas, the Trinity, and the Limits of Understanding," *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, Vol. 7 No. 4 (October 2005): 414–427. Torrance considers Aquinas dualist in his theology cutting of the doctrine of the One God from the doctrine of the Triune God. See Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 285.

Byzantine tradition, and, indeed, non-Byzantine theological traditions from a less binary perspective than Torrance would likely bear much fruit.⁵⁴

Moreover, an evangelical patristic theology can approach many themes not explored by Torrance on account of his avoidance of Latin and Byzantine theology because of their dualism. First, an evangelical patristic theology might explore a grace-based study of asceticism. Asceticism is often viewed as a “work” to do. However, if viewed in light of the Reformation the Byzantine ascetic tradition may have much to offer evangelicals. Second, the great ascetic tradition offers the vocation of monasticism. This has much to offer the evangelical churches today in many regards.

Some of Torrance’s other themes may be picked up and explored further. For example, Torrance’s reconstruction of the patristic notion of the bishopric regarding “Presbyterian bishops” may have more fruit on, for example, North American soil where less wars have been fought over church-related issues. Figures such as Habets pick up elements of Torrance and explore them further.⁵⁵ However, many elements of Torrance’s remain to be applied throughout in the current conversations wherein they are relevant, for example, Torrance’s doctrine

⁵⁴ Iain Torrance (T.F.’s son) has written a magisterial text on Severus of Antioch (born c. 465 C.E.). Rather than as a “Monophysite,” Torrance presents Severus as in line with the classic patristic on Christology and, as such, paves the way for ecumenical rapprochement between Oriental Orthodox and other non-Chalcedonians with adherents to Chalcedon seeing the two sides as less polarized than once thought. As such, Iain Torrance carries his father’s work into post-Chalcedonian patristic theology. See Torrance, *Christology After Chalcedon*. His book is based on his PhD thesis and provides a substantial theological introduction to Severus’ theology (pp. 37–74) and an introduction (75–139) and translation (143–236) of a selection of Severus’ letters. It should be noted that T.F. Torrance was very appreciative of his son’s work and referenced it in *The Christian Doctrine of God* (on page 160)

⁵⁵ e.g. Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance*.

of the Trinity, particularly his potential role as a *via media* between current debates in Trinitarian theology.⁵⁶

Further studies may also explore other classical patristic themes or even different figures appropriating the Fathers into their evangelical traditions. For example, Philip Schaff's genealogy of church history may offer more elements by which an evangelical patristic theology can move forward.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, T.F. Torrance has much to offer in regards to his reading and reconstruction of the *Consensus Patrum*. The best way to move forward is to appropriate Torrance's *Consensus Patrum*, revisit and possibly even leave behind the purely contextual elements, and continue the work which Torrance began, namely, a re-reading of the classical Christian tradition in light of the Reformation and continuing to tap into the bounteous well of the *Consensus Patrum* seeing what can be learned from the theology and lives of the classical, truly ecumenical, church Fathers.

⁵⁶ Noble suggests the same in his book *Holy Trinity: Holy People*.

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